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PUBLIC OPINION AND THE LAST PEACE

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMEN HOUSE, E.C.4  
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK  
TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPETOWN BOMBAY  
CALCUTTA MADRAS  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

# PUBLIC OPINION AND THE LAST PEACE

*by*

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

1944

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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## PREFACE

THE disappointment of the hopes of lasting peace, so freely entertained in 1919, has led many students of politics to analyse the causes of the present war and trace them back to the Treaties which crowned our victory. Generally speaking, the verdict passed on the Treaties has been severe and there is a considerable danger that it will be assumed that most things done then were done wrong, and that the golden rule must be to reverse the procedure and principles employed in 1919. To the cant of 'never again' succeeds the cant of 'not like last time'. It is common enough at present to hear people asking how they can 'avoid the errors of Versailles', while at the same time planning a peace that would repeat and even accentuate the provisions made in the last settlement. It should always be remembered that the principal beneficiary of the phrase, 'the errors of Versailles' has been Hitler and Germany

This book does not seek to examine the Treaties in detail. There is already a considerable literature, some of it excellent, on that subject. It is rather an examination of what people thought and felt about the peace settlement at the time and how these ideas changed and developed. It is an analysis of political opinion, detailed only in respect of the Commons' debates in 1919 and thereafter more general. I recognize that it is a difficult subject, full of pitfalls. To recapitulate what people thought and believed ten or twenty years ago is not conducive to the personal popularity of him who attempts the task. It is also extremely difficult to convince people that they did say or think the things which you allege them to have said and thought. All that can be quoted is the utterances of well-known leaders and publicists, but we can all at a pinch claim to have been wiser in retrospect than our leaders in any one particular. You may generalize about the evolution of the political sentiments of a party or class, but there will be infinite exceptions which will not quite fit the pattern. Thus, while it may be said with some justice that Conservatives came to abjure the project of trying and punishing the Kaiser, explaining it as one of Mr. Lloyd George's vulgarisms, there are many (I suspect that at present they are an increasing number) who always quite unfeignedly regretted that the Kaiser was not

tried and hung. It may be said that the Radicals showed a culpable indifference to problems of strategy and armament, but any one of them can probably quote some saving qualification that he made, or at least point to a much more flagrant and violent statement by a friend and colleague. We were all wrong, but none of us quite so wrong as the other fellow.

Anyone who writes on this subject of public opinion finds it difficult not to convey in the course of his analysis a slightly odious impression of assuming a superior wisdom, of having been wise not merely after the event but before it. I have tried to avoid giving this impression, probably without success. If it is desirable, and I think it is, for a writer on this subject to state what in general were the errors which he himself committed in his political thinking, I would be glad that the reader should impute to me the errors common to the moderate men of the Left, Liberal and Labour. There are white sheets for all, and that is the one which I would assume. I would make one qualification: my white sheet should be marked with the letter V to distinguish it from my friends. The V stands for Versailles. From the moment the Treaty was signed I was a defender of it. I have always been at variance on this subject with most of my political friends, and with all of them younger than me in age.

The settlement made at the end of the last war was twofold. It was a settlement of the affairs of Europe based on certain sound principles and elaborated with considerable care and skill. It was open on many counts to grave criticism and yet on any one issue a serious case can be made in favour of the dispositions actually made, and it is still a perplexing matter to decide whether some other decision would or would not have been better. Secondly, it provided a system for the preservation of peace, which held out some prospect of success and for which it could be claimed that it was much better than no system at all. This system broke down by the beginning of the year 1936. Its end can be defined by two precise and clearly marked events, the occupation of Addis Ababa by Italian troops and the occupation of the Rhineland by German troops. In the judgements I make in this book I do not anywhere presume to suggest what conduct was right for British Governments to pursue after 1936. From that time onwards everything was on a razor edge. The Spanish War, the Occupation of Austria and later the Munich Settlement, were all terrible dilemmas in which

estimates of military power, beyond the reach of the public, were a preponderant factor. We have yet to learn whether the Axis could have been stayed in its course earlier than 1939, or whether time for rearmament was on our side. Before 1936 there was a system that might have been maintained, the Covenant of the League and the *status quo* in Europe. My one firm thesis is that this was worth maintaining and could have been defended. How the various currents of opinion in this country moved and intermingled on the subject of this settlement and of this system is the problem which my book seeks to investigate.

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*September 1943*

## NOTES ON TERMS EMPLOYED

*Pacifism, Pacifist.* I go into this at the beginning of Chapter VI, quoting dictionary definitions. I use it generally to denote those who believe in non-resistance or who had such an aversion to thinking in terms of armed force as to amount to pacifism. The broader sense of believing in or seeking the abolition of war is too wide to be useful. As I endeavour to show, all statesmen and parties were committed to this thesis.

*Radical, Liberal, Tory, Conservative.* I distinguish two main schools of thought on peace and foreign policy. First the Conservative ; second the Radical. Radical is used to cover all those who were in opposition to the Conservative government. It therefore includes the official Liberal and Labour parties and all persons aiding and assisting them. Liberal with a capital L I try to reserve for the Liberal party proper, but include such Americans as Wilson or Vice-President Wallace in the class. *Liberal with a small l* I try to avoid, since almost everyone supposes himself so to be. As much as possible I use the word socialist as the adjective for the noun Labour. It also includes Communist. Very generally I try to use Conservative when speaking of the Party and its official leaders and Tory to denote a type of political sentiment rather than an organized body of opinion.

*Left and Right* I try to avoid. I allow myself occasionally to refer to the upper, middle or upper-middle classes. After all, they do in a sense exist.

## INTRODUCTION

In the year 1910 Europe seemed to be entering upon a period of peace longer and more secure than any that had been known since the age of the Antonine Emperors of Rome. It is true that Europe in that year was not wholly at peace. There was civil war between reds and whites in Russia, war between Russia and Poland and between Greeks and Turks. But it was hoped, and so it proved, that these struggles would die down like the afterswell of a great storm. By the middle twenties the armies had ceased to march, had indeed been disbanded and reduced to peace-time strength and less than the former peace-time activity. Fear of war was not absent, but there was less immediate expectation of it than ever before in the lives of the oldest men still living. The idea that there should be no wars between the nations of Europe and of the world, from being a mere eccentricity of the Anglo-Saxons, was being entertained as a not wholly absurd hypothesis by millions of European citizens. The belief that war was wrong and should be avoidable had never been more widely held.

We know now that these expectations were to be disappointed but that is not to say that they were unreasonable. To maintain now that the peace of Europe was bound to break down, is as weakly dogmatic as it was to maintain that it was certain to endure. But to inquire why and how it broke down is a legitimate activity.

One probable reason for the failure of the peace is that there was such divergence of opinion as to the sentiments on which peace depended and the means by which the coming of war might be stayed. We may distinguish four different schools of thought and feeling.

*First.* There were those who considered that it was over-optimistic, and indeed careless, to expect that the deterrents against war in the form of national interest and popular sentiment would be in themselves sufficient. It was necessary to organize peace, to make such political preparations as would secure that any state or group of states which desired to make war would be met not only by the disapproval but by the resistance of all other states. As a remedy for the war of some against some there was to be in the last resort a war of all

against one. It was hoped that this would prevent the war from beginning or, at worst, make it short and comparatively bloodless. This may be called the institutionalist school. It had, for what it was worth, official sanction, for by the intellectual tenacity and moral authority of Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, it was actually written into the Treaty of Peace between the late belligerents in the form of a bond or covenant which bound the signatories to an association for the furtherance of peace and the repression of war. Nothing like this had been known before in human history. Most of the constituted states of the world adhered to this new system and in due course the defeated and ostracized belligerent countries were induced to participate in it.

*Second.* There were those who looked not to anything sealed on a parchment or regulated by jurists as the means of avoiding war, but to the good sense and self-interest of individual men. This may be called the intuitionist or common sense school. Its strength lay in the fact that the war of 1914-18 had shocked the people of Europe more than any previous war, the victors quite as much as the neutrals or the vanquished. By the twentieth century the means of destruction had assumed such titanic powers that men felt that they must learn the lesson that war was an activity with which modern society must dispense. Science, by making war so terrible, must also make it impossible. Most terrible of all the threats was the bombing aeroplane. It had been employed in the last war on a minor scale as an accessory to the gun, but the average man required no gift of Wellsian prescience to see that its power would develop rapidly, almost by geometrical progression. Indeed, great as has been the havoc caused by bombs in this war, it has perhaps been not more but less than was anticipated. It is a reasonable guess that if in 1925 the tonnage of bombs dropped by Germany on Britain and Britain on Germany in the first three years of this war had been stated, the vast majority of the citizens of both countries would have asserted that such a prospect of terror would have induced their governments to find any settlement short of war. 'Surely,' they would have argued, and 'surely' is the keyword to this school of thought, 'we can, we must, we shall find some means of avoiding such needless horrors.'

*Third* There were those who believed that wars were only possible because there were men who either profited by the

manufacture or enjoyed making use of the weapons of war. As war could only be carried on by these weapons, large, heavy, costly, and elaborate, it could best be prevented by a general refusal to make them and to permit people to be trained in their use. If men and women would refuse to make such weapons, if they refuse to talk or even to think of such weapons, there could be no war. This we may call the disarmament or pacifist school. In the Anglo-Saxon countries it had as its high command and general staff the Society of Friends or Quakers.

*Fourth.* There were those who believed in a homoeopathic remedy for war. These people considered that the forces making for war, both material and psychological, were extremely powerful and that neither institutions on the one hand nor good feeling and dreams of disarmament on the other could avert a tragedy rooted not perhaps in the nature but in the social state of man. This school, which may be called the socialist school, preached that the remedy against war was war. National, or as they were sometimes termed, capitalist wars, could only be exorcized by furthering the class war. In that long epoch of European history which had begun with the Reformation and had ended suddenly and decisively in October 1917, wars were waged between nations. If people could come to feel that the bonds of nationality were less than the bonds of class, that there was a call to struggle, not necessarily with arms, against a nearer and more cruel enemy than any foreigner, against the monopolists of economic power, the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, the bankers, the employers, then no one nation could fight another nation, for the better part of every nation would be waging another battle. The struggle of Teuton with Slav would be forgotten in the struggle of masters and men. This struggle might be long or short, peaceful or bloody, but it was not to be evaded or even regretted, for it was fated to take place. A philosophic view of human history proclaimed to all hard-thinking men that this war must run its course and equally made it clear where victory would lie.

We know now that the expectations of all these different schools were disappointed. It is easy now to see some of the major reasons for the failure of these expectations. The full explanation requires nothing less than a careful descriptive and analytic history of the past twenty years, and if the Axis powers are defeated and only if they are defeated will such a history be compiled. It is the nature of such fundamental

conflicts that the opportunity to write their history is one of the prizes of victory. We have a Roman history of the war with Carthage ; we have no Carthaginian history of the war with Rome. .

It is possible briefly to sketch some of the main deficiencies in the attitudes to peace and war enumerated above, the most obvious of which is that they were so diverse and each at some point hampered the other. The problem is the more complex since we are dealing not with four different groups of men but with ideas which they entertained, one idea by no means excluding the other. Thus the orthodox Liberal who supported the Covenant would also hope for much from general, but not unilateral, disarmament, and would not disdain such opposition to war as might come from a general strike of the workers. The Conservative might lean primarily on the common-sense aversion to war while not regarding the League as entirely useless. The pacifist could be, and frequently was, an enthusiastic League man ; he assumed that it would never stain itself with violence in resisting aggression, but would somehow conjure it away. He could also listen to the Socialist, if not when he spoke of class war at least when he spoke of brotherhood. Happiest of all was the Socialist. He could support the League in its various aspects; after all, it was in itself a kind of ' internationale '. He could make much of the deep revulsion of the common man in all lands against war and he could join hands with the pacifist who denounced the manufacture of armaments since so much of it was done for private profit. If he were a thorough-going Socialist, he was bound to put his main reliance on the homeopathic remedy and to expect that war between nations would wilt away before the spectacle of war between classes. Yet he need not entirely disdain the other remedies, just as a doctor who knows that it will come in the end to an operation need not refuse to prescribe rest, diet and medicine.

The fact that peace slipped away between the rival remedies does not however mean that each had not its own peculiar defects. The institutionalist school seemed, on the face of it, to have both logic and common sense, realism and idealism on its side. This is a less powerful combination than might be thought, since logicians tend to have a contempt for alleged common sense, and the apostles of common sense are inclined ' to slip back the safety catch of their revolvers ' at the mention of the word logic. Idealists feel that realists are their natural

enemies ; realists are so readily contemptuous of idealism that in their haste they sometimes fail to define their own ideas further than declaring that they are not idealistic. The idea of the combination of all nations against an aggressor was indeed logical. If not the only, it was at least the most certain remedy against war, since no nation is so strong that the others in combination could not overpower it. This was the thesis of that most logical and cynical of philosophers, Thomas Hobbes. But to realize this state of affairs was difficult, since it depended on states acting with some of the promptitude of individuals. Certainly it was in the interest of the majority of states to take action. Those who were nearest the seat of trouble had the stimulus of danger, those who were far away had less immediately at stake but less to endure. A severance of trade relations and a small contribution from the armed forces might suffice for them. The general feeling was that it was contrary to common sense to expect that the citizens of any state would make a serious sacrifice for a purpose as remote as saving a nation at the other side of the world from attack. In the event this common-sense expectation was proved to be correct, but only after fifteen years had passed without the members of the League elaborating the measures which were required not only to prepare for the smooth working of sanctions against an aggressor, but also to make the public familiar with the idea that action would at some time be necessary. The British Government took the lead in evading and obscuring this issue. The French, self-confessed devotees of ' logic ', took the other side, but with a capacity for making mental reservations as to what would be a case for sanctions that aroused suspicion of their true intentions. But if it was a good common-sense guess that the citizens of the member states of the League would not be willing to fight each other's battles, it is an error to argue that they would not have been wiser to do so. If military sanctions had been applied against Italy in 1935, Greece and Jugoslavia on the one hand and Brazil and Uruguay on the other would not have had to contribute or suffer in equal degree. Greece might have lost the Ionian Islands for the time being and Jugoslavia might have had to abandon Spalato and the Jugoslav part of the port of Fiume. But even Brazil and Uruguay have now probably suffered more in this war than they would have suffered from Italy in 1935. We are here making the assumption that success for the League would have

been progressive, just as failure has been, and that the spectacle of the ruin of one aggressor would have deterred others, or at least increased the experience and efficiency of the League in preparing for and facing the next crisis. To-day all this may seem to Brazilians as also to Greeks and British to be 'common sense'. The term common sense indeed is really somewhat loose and meaningless. It is a phrase used to describe short-term, hand-to-mouth policies or else to describe arguments or states of mind which their users or possessors are unable, unwilling or afraid to express with precision.

But the 'realists' or opponents of the League or institutional idea sometimes used another line of argument more explicit than the mere appeal to common sense. This was the unsatisfied powers argument. According to this thesis, Germany, Italy and Japan were cribbed and confined and must inevitably expand. It was absurd to suppose that they would not, and therefore it was folly to oppose them. This argument had much force and undoubtedly contributed to the contempt for the League method which was so effectively expressed by those who prided themselves on living by facts and not by fancies. It was never made quite clear, however, where this expansion would take place and how a limit would be placed on it. A good deal of generosity was displayed by various people in earmarking Manchuria to Japan, the Ukraine to Germany, Abyssinia to Italy. Russia was not going to fight for Manchuria, Britain for the Ukraine, nor France for Abyssinia. But no British statesman ever made the realistic suggestion of handing over Malaya, no Frenchman proposed to abandon Tunis. In view of this it was not surprising that the Czechs and Poles proved to be pedantic about the Sudeten Land and Western Pomerania. The truth is that if the logic of those who preached the need of satisfying the unsated, and perhaps insatiable, powers was pressed too hard, their claims could only be anticipated with the idealism of a Gandhi or accepted with the realism of a Pétain or a Laval. None the less, realism prevailed almost until the realists found themselves in the air-raid shelters. Hard-thinking statesmen like Mr. Churchill and Mr. Garvin proclaimed the importance and greatness of Japan and argued that we must not seek to stay her. The League idealists wilted under their fire. It may well be that Britain and the United States were unable, as they were also unwilling, to use their power to check Japan, but if so, the true realist should

have said that we had been defeated and were further endangered. But the League idealists were hampered in their opposition to the unsatisfied powers argument by a weakness in their own mentality. They were sensitive to the statement that the League was merely an alliance of the victorious powers to preserve the *status quo* in favour of the haves against the have nots. The most telling argument with which to convince their opponents was to point out that, if we did not successfully employ League sanctions against an aggressor, we should lose power, land, and wealth. But this argument would shock their friends, the most radical of whom were inclined to think little of the British Empire and to regard the land and wealth as ill-gotten and unjustly monopolized.

There was another difficulty in the way of the advocate of the League, and that was a personal and almost accidental one. The League was baptized in the name of Woodrow Wilson. He was not its only begetter, and the conception owed if anything more to British than to American thought. But his great pre-eminence, personal as well as official, overshadowed all other statesmen with regard to the League idea, and there is reason to suppose that Clemenceau and Lloyd George were not prime movers in the matter and did not understand the full implications of the institution. Now in this country Woodrow Wilson was not in general a popular figure, especially with what may broadly be called the upper and official classes, which for convenience we may call the Conservatives. He had appeared to us in the early stages of the war as a paper statesman, meeting torpedoes with diplomatic notes. It was not generally known how much these notes had actually restrained the submarine war of our enemy. Nor did people in England realize what a strong and even ruthless ruler of his country he had been in peace and in war. The figure they contrasted him with was Theodore Roosevelt, the books in which they read about him were the *Life and Letters* of the perfervid Ambassador Page and the slighting and perverted sketch in Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace*. The first prejudiced the Tories, the second converted the Radicals, at any rate the younger and less stable among them. Wilson was to an extraordinary degree a man to be admired and hated. In his own country the fiercest feelings were aroused by him. Even in his own University of Princeton the Faculty was ranged in two sharply opposed parties about him, ten years after he had left to take his high

place in politics.<sup>1</sup> Wilson was Ulster-Scottish-American, Presbyterian, Liberal-Democrat, academic professor and jurist, all these words being to some people terms of abuse. Ignorant or disdainful of the arts of acquiring easy popularity with the multitude, he was content to instruct, enlighten and exhort, to serve and, to the full stretch of his constitutional power, to govern them. He did not fear, indeed, he seems almost to have relished making enemies. While the invincible malevolence of some, such as Senator Lodge, could not have been appeased, he was unable to win over more moderate antagonists. He was an idealist in the sense that he aimed at great but distant objectives and demanded much of the intelligence and virtue of citizens. This is the kind of statesmanship that builds deeply and well, but which, if it fails, falls very hard. It is not necessary to elaborate the fact that such a man would not be agreeable to the men and forces which prevailed in Britain from 1919 onwards. 'Gladstone with an American accent' was one journalist's description of him. To an England about to pass under almost twenty years' Conservative government the schemes he fostered must inevitably have incurred suspicion and contempt. He was, so far as a practical statesman can be, doctrinaire in his manner and methods. This is not necessarily a vice, for a State may perish from lack of doctrine just as much as from a surfeit of it. What matters is that the doctrine should be sane and clear. But once the label 'doctrinaire' is fixed to a project, it stands condemned in the eyes of many. This certainly happened to the League idea because Wilson fathered it.

In England, after the first enthusiasm had passed, the League stood condemned for many because of its most prominent advocates. Although in the debate in Parliament on the Treaty a statesman as hard and strong and even, as his enemies would have called him, brutal as Sir Edward Carson spoke with earnest hope of the virtues of the League, it was very soon branded as the hobby of unpractical idealists. Two eminent men stood out as the leaders of the League of Nations Union, Professor Gilbert Murray and Lord Robert Cecil, Viscount Cecil

<sup>1</sup> When I was a visiting fellow at the Graduate College, Princeton, in 1923-4, I was embarrassed by this. I was asked what I thought of the site of the College. Courtesy and also my own opinion made me express approval. But this seemed strangely to please some people and to offend others. I soon learned that Wilson had bitterly opposed that situation for the College for a number of cogent academic reasons.

of Chelwood. Dr. Murray was like Wilson a professor, a Liberal, an idealist. The electors of that supposed home of academic radicalism, Oxford University, persistently rejected him as a candidate for Parliament.<sup>1</sup> Because of the confusion of thought that has surrounded the word 'pacifist' he was often thought of as a non-resister, a believer in unilateral disarmament, whereas those who know him and have studied his speeches realize that he was from the first a believer in League action and in clear-sighted preparations for sanctions. Distinguished as his services have been, the label 'doctrinaire' has been affixed to his policies. Lord Cecil had a somewhat similar reputation. Although his father, the great Lord Salisbury, was as Prime Minister regarded as one of the most astute, the least doctrinaire and least sentimental of statesmen, in the time of his sons it has become customary to say that 'the Cecils are queer'. And queer they certainly seem to the average philistine man. His brother Hugh (Lord Quickswood), in the zeal of his churchmanship and the intense and rigorous form of his Toryism, was a by-word for unseasonable fanaticism, a mediaeval figure as he was sometimes called, and mediaeval he certainly is in the acuteness and boldness of his reasoning. Lord Robert was regarded as a milder man, but the Cecil eccentricity, which in Lord Hugh took the form of overstating the Conservative case and arguing from premisses which everyone else had forgotten to conclusions which were electorally dangerous, brought Lord Robert in fact, if not in name, over to the Liberal side in politics. When in 1919 he resigned from office because he could not approve of the disestablishment of the Welsh Church, enacted five years earlier, being put into operation, his reputation for impracticality seemed to be confirmed. When he resigned office again in 1927, because he considered that the Conservative cabinet was incapable of a sound League of Nations policy, not a Tory dog barked at his going, while the Radicals were surprised that he had ever joined such a government and had lasted so long in it, the 'cecilite' of his behaviour was evident to all. No matter how carefully Lord Cecil argued in favour of 'putting teeth', as the phrase now goes,

<sup>1</sup> It is commonly thought outside Oxford by Oxford men themselves that in the post-war years the students were becoming predominantly radical. The majority of those most active and vocal in clubs and debating societies may have been so by a margin. But in 1929, after a decade during which young men and women were being added to the electoral roll at the rate of about a thousand a year, the Conservatives held the two seats as easily as before.

into the Covenant, the public could not get rid of the impression that he was a man who wanted us to cast all our weapons into the sea and relied for the preservation of peace on a hazy goodwill distilled in the corridors of Geneva.

With Wilson as its patron saint and martyr and Cecil and Murray as its chief apostles, it was inevitable that the League would incur much suspicion and contempt. If we had had a long period of Liberal-Labour government this might not have mattered. A ten years' tenure of the Foreign Office by such a statesman as Mr. Arthur Henderson might have translated much that was only advocacy into action, but for good or ill that did not happen. But while most of the things said about Cecil and Murray were false and unjust, it cannot be denied that they often kept queer company. They had as allies and colleagues in the League of Nations Union many rabid pacifists, non-resisters, Quakers, and so on. As their main enemies were the Conservatives, they were in the dangerous position of having no enemies to the Left and the fanatics of anti-war seemed to be their bodyguard. The League at its birth, however, had one more impressive and respectable apostle in General Smuts. Although he is a philosopher in his spare time and a lawyer by profession, General Smuts is deeply admired as a soldier, whether fighting against us or with us. He has an honoured position as both a Nestor and Cincinnatus of the British Commonwealth, and what might seem pedantry as conceived by Wilson and preached by Cecil must be taken more seriously when espoused by the gallant commando leader of the Boers and the later conqueror of German East Africa. Smuts was one of the authors of the Covenant and must have been present when the famous Clause 16, the sanctions clause, was drafted. But later on he seems to have imbibed a draught of 'common sense', for he took the view that while the League was useful as a forum and clearing house it must not be thought of as an instrument of action. Yet in 1935 common sense, that most protean and malleable commodity, as adaptable as the ectoplasm of the spiritualists, took another shape, and General Smuts approved of the policy of sanctions against Italy. It may of course be that this change was dictated by a prudential willingness to accept the policy of the British Government once it had been declared and could not be withdrawn. His advocacy of sanctions would seem to have been justified, for the failure to apply them did not save the South African army from having to

force the bloody crossing of the Juba river and make the long march to Addis Ababa. It would probably have been simpler to go to Addis Ababa before the Italians had got there. The South Africans might never then have had to see Tobruk.

But the greatest blow of all to the League cause was the defection of America when the United States Senate refused to ratify the Peace Treaty. It is very difficult to say how far the absence of the United States from the Council of the League was an irreparable blow or how far it was accepted by many people in England as a convenient excuse for abandoning a policy that was in any case considered foolish. Broadly speaking, the average Englishman considers that the American withdrawal absolves us for our failure to make a success of the League as an institution, while the Americans blame us for our failure to make it succeed. The English, believing, not quite accurately, that the League was Wilson's own idea (and certainly it was Wilson who forced it into the Treaty), did remain members, however poor their leadership, and when the crisis came were the only nation to move a ship or man a gun in defence of the Covenant. To the Americans was left the remarkable satisfaction of blaming Europe for not acting in the spirit and by the methods of their President, and at the same time bringing that President and all his supporters to political ruin. It is generally agreed that Wilson in his political tactics was both obstinate and maladroit. He was prepared to meet the opposition by a bold frontal attack, but was suddenly stricken by an attack of paralysis. He has also been blamed because he refused to placate the Senate by abandoning Article X of the Covenant, that article which guaranteed the territorial integrity of the member states. Yet in the light of the past few years it is not certain that Wilson did not show sound judgement in staking all upon that article. Violation of a frontier is the simplest and clearest hall-mark of aggression. Frontiers are the last things that nations will sacrifice and the first things that they will defend. Not that Wilson thought that frontiers could be eternal. Article XIX provided for the possibility of revision, but he considered that violation of a frontier by force was the one thing that could not be tolerated, the one sure sign of a deliberate will to war. Few people in 1930 would have believed that we should declare war because of the violation of the frontier of Poland ; all the canons of realism and common sense forbade so strange a fantasy. Yet so it was. Our

ultimatum to Germany on September 3rd, 1939, demanded the withdrawal of the German troops behind that frontier which had become to Liberal and Tory alike almost the perfect example of absurdity in the peace settlement. It was not that we cared whether the frontier posts were several kilometres east or west, but we took it for a sign. We are now convinced that violations of frontiers are events that will recur the more they are suffered with impunity. At Munich we had tried revision, and the new frontier lasted six months. That method could not be tried again with any reasonable hope of success. To put it in terms of articles of the Covenant, which we were careful not to invoke, at Munich we applied Article XIX (revision), and over Poland we fell back on Article X (territorial integrity). Because of his insistence on the need for Article X it may be supposed that Wilson foresaw that this would happen, somewhere sometime. For this he must receive credit, although it is still open to anyone to argue that he would have done well to accept the half loaf and get the Treaty ratified. On the other hand, in view of the development of public feeling in America against accepting responsibilities outside her borders, her actual presence in the League might have done more harm than good. Her objections to meeting possible contingencies and preparing sanctions would have been even more powerful than the British objections. It is possible to argue that the League's one chance of success was that America should not come into it. However that may be, her refusal to enter it convinced a large number of people in this and other countries that the refusal was fatal to the prospects of the League. The odds therefore were against its success and its advocates had to accept the burden of proving that it might none the less be successful. They were never quite numerous and influential and united enough to do this, though in 1935 they seemed to be coming near to it.

The second ground for believing that war might be averted was, as we saw, the intuitionist or common sense school. They had behind them the feeling of the common man against war, fear, resentment, disgust and, after some time, in the belligerent countries, even shame. Probably there was no time in the nineteen-twenties when any ruler in Europe could have ordered his people into the trenches. He would have been more likely to find himself strung up on a lamp-post. For the common man was in a strong position in Europe in 1920. Everywhere he was

enfranchised. There were no more despotic monarchs to order him to fight with blind obedience. The feudal aristocracies, even where they retained some of their wealth and influence, had to sing low in these days of universal suffrage, freely elected parliaments and referenda. The world did seem to be made safe for democracy by democracy. It is indeed difficult to imagine how parliamentary states like England, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and even the Weimar republic of Germany could ever have come to war. Popular assemblies and free newspapers are not necessarily pacific ; they may be swept by waves of jingo feeling. In the period before 1914 the aristocratic diplomats of the day used to complain that they could keep the peace easily enough if only low-class journalists did not stir up the mud of cheap popular patriotism. But Europe after 1918 had a lot of rope to pay out before it neared the precipice of war. The easy patriotic enthusiasms of the old days were likely to wilt at the spectacle of war as men had known it from 1914-18, and still more at the spectacle of war as men could well imagine it to be in the age of aircraft. Before war could become a present danger there had first to be revolutions in which the people, or a sufficient number of them, exchanged political freedom for certain benefits, real or imaginary, which a dictator promised to confer. Even then it is probable that there was no one moment at which the people of Italy and Germany said, 'Now we can have our war'. But a moment came when it was no longer possible for them to disobey their governments unless they were prepared to rebel, and the government had a monopoly of machine guns and tanks. It was simpler to fight the foreigner. Many of the younger men were willing enough, for the control of their education and all that they read and heard had schooled them to cherish their national grievances and assert their national claims.

The belief that no one would ever want to fight another war also failed to allow for the instability of human sentiments. After about fifteen years the fear of war may decline by mere passage of time. This did not happen in Europe generally. In the victorious and the neutral countries the horror of war if anything grew stronger. But it was different in the defeated countries amongst which Italy chose to range herself. During the previous century we had seen the phenomenon of an outbreak of violent feeling about fifteen years after the ending of a disastrous war. The French in 1830, fifteen years after Water-

loo, made a revolution and became infected by chauvinist sentiment. After 1870, in the middle 'eighties, another wave swept France and nearly placed the military adventurer Boulanger in power. After the Southern States of the American Union had recovered from the first shock of defeat, there arose the Ku Klux Klan and other violent societies who took a fierce revenge on their conquerors. It is the defeated countries that have something to gain, and feel, although this is obviously absurd, that they have little to lose by the gamble of war. It is only necessary to taste defeat to understand this emotion, the English and Americans however were taken by surprise at its intensity. Even the bitterness of defeat might not have sufficed to allow the will to war to revive if there had not also been distress and poverty. It is unsafe to assert that prosperity will necessarily bring contentment, witness the history of Ireland when the land-purchase settlement and growing agricultural prosperity seemed only to feed the growth of Sinn Fein and republicanism. But the heavy unemployment amongst the German workers did assist the growth of the Nazi movement, and the reduction of unemployment seemed to justify it after it had come to power.

In the victorious countries, however, which suffered severely from the economic crisis, the dislike of war and the weapons of war and the thought of war was too strong to permit the suffering workers to seek a remedy in rearmament, even when rearmament was becoming an urgent need. It was not the political followers of Arthur Henderson and Leon Blum who rushed gladly to the armaments factories. The workers of Sheffield and Glasgow never called for guns even when it seemed to be the only way of acquiring butter. This should be remembered to their honour if not to their political good sense. It is a remarkable example of the power of political teaching and doctrine over mere economic needs.

The common-sense school therefore had good reason to suppose in the early 'twenties that we had a long road to travel before we could come within reach of war. Many things, none of them inevitable and some of them, as it seemed, extremely improbable had to happen before the danger was near. But the members of the common-sense school were on the whole the most normal, sane and average members of the public, buoyant and practical, little given to debate and speculation, the least ideological of men. They were therefore slow to see the signs

of approaching storm. The practical achievements of fascist governments impressed them and they were soothed by the absence of cant doctrine and uplift-talk of which they heard so much in this country. They trusted that in the last resort matters could be settled as by one sensible man with another. Mussolini, for instance, was so obviously the opposite of so many silly men in this country that it was natural to suppose that he must be sensible in the easy-going Anglo-Saxon sense of the word. Flanked by King Victor Emmanuel and Marshal Balbo, this socialist anti-clerical peasant from Romagna with his repertoire of syndicalist philosophy was not easy to see in his true colours. It is true that we were warned. In 1933 there was published in English an article by Mussolini in which he extolled war as necessary for the achievement of the highest human good, not merely for what it might bring in the way of gain but as an activity of the spirit.<sup>1</sup> After that we were really not entitled to be surprised when he did make war. He dealt with us fairly enough in this matter. But one suspects that the feeling of many sensible Englishmen was at bottom a conviction that the fellow would remember that he was only a dago after all.

Whether there was anything to be said for the pacifist or disarmament school is a matter of opinion and temperament. Either one feels that there is something in that attitude or one does not. To do justice to the extreme members of this school it should be pointed out that they did not guarantee that non-resistance would always avert war. War might come; what they taught was a method of facing war, refusing to fight and accepting all the consequences as a lesser evil. The difficulty about this is that such resolves cannot possibly be kept except by a small number of individuals; the aggressive passions will always prompt some to resist with all the consequences of resistance. Even in India, where Hindu thought has encouraged non-resistance for many generations with all the force of religion and philosophy, there are always some walking imperfectly in the faith who mar a movement of non-violence by violent acts. But most pacifists did actually encourage the belief that by refusing at all costs to provide armaments and by counselling non-resistance they were helping to avoid war. The difficulty about this is that the brunt of your attack on armaments must fall mainly on your own country's armed forces. You have not

<sup>1</sup> Mussolini, B.: *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*

the power to reduce other peoples' armed forces. A Quaker may demonstrate against a tank on Salisbury Plain. But unless an equal number of German Quakers demonstrate against tanks in Berlin, the danger of war is not diminished; it may even be enhanced. The pacifist idea, to have a chance of succeeding, requires to be a tide rising evenly in all the countries which may come into conflict, and this not for a few years only but for a long period, otherwise one country by making a sudden reversal of its policy may gain a monopoly in armed force. The pacifist may say that the project has not been tested, since no great power has ever thrown away its arms. None the less the prospects of success appear remote. At any rate it has been shown twice in this century that nations which are much more reluctant to arm than their rivals can be taken at a serious disadvantage. Pacifism in the full sense of the word flourished most in Britain and America and to some extent in Scandinavia. It had the support of some brave German idealists. It reared its head in France, especially among school teachers, but generally speaking neither Latin intellect nor Slav temperament is congenial to it. The Russians pay honour to the mighty name of Tolstoy, but it cannot be said that they disdain the sword.

The indirect effects of the pacifist agitation were however of the greatest importance. As we have seen, pacifists infiltrated into the ranks of the League supporters and assisted to give them that distaste for facing the full strategic implications of the Covenant which was one of their weaknesses. More important still was the shock and the disgust which they caused to the more traditional part of the community. For while in theory one may distinguish between an evil activity and the instruments by which it is carried out, in practice the distinction fades. If you teach that war is evil and that the manufacture of its instruments evil, it is impossible to avoid giving the impression that soldiers are wicked. Temperance enthusiasts found the same difficulty in distinguishing between 'the accursed stuff' and its purveyors. The members of the armed forces in this country in peace time form not a very numerous but a very respectable part of the community. The ex-service men numbered over four millions, the bereaved relatives of the fallen another two millions at least. The suggestion that, in the past as well as in the future, war was a wicked thing, and that those who took part in it were *pro tanto* wicked,

caused deep resentment. It was no wonder that many people thought that the country, and especially the young, were bad-blooded and decadent to a degree. Not even the presence of some beribboned ex-soldiers in the pacifist ranks dissipated this resentment. The pacifists had this effect on a large part of the public, so that when first Mussolini and then Hitler overthrew the Liberal state they seemed, in spite of all their excesses and violent rhetoric, to be bringing a breath of sanity and fresh air into the world again. Military discipline and display, order, manliness, leadership, physical courage, material sacrifice, all these qualities, esteemed by the majority of men throughout recorded history, were coming into their own again. Hitler spoke of the fourteen years of shame, the years of the Weimar Republic. In this country we had our intellectual Weimar Republic, fourteen years of strange radical talk, of psychological fads, of perverse and neurotic ideas. King and Country, Church and State, home and family, all seemed to be the aunt-sallies of a reckless and faithless generation. When voices were raised in Europe boldly reversing these notions, it was natural that many honest men should feel heart-felt relief and even a sense of deliverance. In some ways it is strange that they should have felt so. The King was still on the throne and, as was shown during his illness in 1928 and at his Jubilee in 1935, more deeply honoured than ever. The Lord Chancellor was on the Woolsack, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal gravely debating before him. In every year but three, huge Conservative majorities overflowed the benches of the Commons. Classical scholars from Oxford and Cambridge dominated the civil services. The earl was still in his castle and the squire in his hall. The public schools flourished as never before, and new ones were being founded. Truly it might seem that the extreme radicals were most entitled to complain, and complain they certainly did. None the less the Conservative elements of the community during these years had a sense of persecution which was constantly apparent in their talk. The fact is that a revolution of words when it gathers certain force produces in revenge many of the phenomena of a counter-revolution.

The trouble was that the Left was vocal while the Right was silent. The intellectuals seemed all to be extreme, Russell, Haldane, Joad, Cole, Huxley; most of the women writers also were of the same colour. The conventional novelists assisted unwittingly. The young man and girl of good family professing

extreme communist opinions, practising free-love in Chelsea, disdaining as a matter of principle all the sage advice of their parents, these were the stock-in-trade of a hundred stories which were devoured by the subscribers of suburban libraries. The real facts were very different, and these stories had little to do with the life of the majority of young people living quietly with their parents, getting on earnestly with their professions. The country was sound and normal enough. The clash of the generations was there as always, but it seemed to be worse only because a few had chosen to make a principle of it.<sup>1</sup>

The socialist school of thought on war and peace overlapped a great deal with the pacifist. The pacifist proper could not actually welcome a class war, but if it was called a struggle or conflict, dilemma or antithesis, honour would be satisfied. Most of the things which the pacifist felt about war in general were felt by the socialist about capitalist war. Since until 1917 there had never been a socialist state all wars presumably had been capitalist wars more or less. The distinction therefore was important only for the future. About the year 1921 when socialism was particularly powerful, when in this country a general strike was threatened, a strike which if called would almost certainly have been much more serious than the strike of 1926, the socialist cure for war did seem very impressive. Many of us who were not socialists were inclined to feel that socialism, even with some violence, might be worth the price if international war in Europe could thereby be made impossible. It was true that before 1914 the socialist had promised us immunization from war and had failed. In 1914 the great Jaurès fell before an assassin's revolver, yet there is little reason to suppose that even if he had been given a few more days of life many Frenchmen, still less a single German soldier, would have effectively resisted the call to arms. Now the situation had changed. In 1914 most of Europe east of the Rhine was ruled by Emperors and military aristocracies. After 1919 there were mostly republics, one of them a socialist republic. The

<sup>1</sup> Like most Oxford tutors I have had experience of pupils suffering from a nervous crisis during that one crucial week when their whole career is at stake in the final examination for the honours degree. I always find that the strongest emotion is a deep sense of obligation to the pupil's parents, causing terrible anxiety lest their sacrifices for the son's education should not be rewarded by a good degree. This may perhaps be a very acute Oedipus complex, but it looks on the surface very much like common gratitude and decent feeling. "Speaking not as a parent but as a tutor, I could wish they felt less keenly about it all.

workers were everywhere in the ascendant, the rich were shivering in their shoes. The one chance of averting abrupt and violent revolution seemed to be speeding up of social services and accelerating the equalizing processes in the State. And yet in 1939 the peoples of Europe fought again. It was not quite the same as in 1914. In 1939 we had some of the effects which would have been seen if, in 1914, Jaurès had persuaded many Frenchmen not to fight, while the German socialist, Liebknecht, failed to persuade the Germans. The war in the west in 1940 at least was short and, compared to the last struggle, not wasteful of lives. This was partly due to the fact that Moscow had instructed the French Communists not to be very militant. The war only lasted from early May to late June, and this may be considered no small merit. There remained certain operations near the east coast of England involving as we now know tremendous issues but very few men.

The resistance of France was weakened by the lukewarmness of the elements of the extreme Left, as also by the half-heartedness of the extreme Right. The officer class, the traditionalists, the conservatives, the professional militarists, the armaments manufacturers, the supposed propagators of war, were broken reeds. Saul also was among the prophets. We have grown to accept this and understand it, but it would have seemed very strange to socialists in 1920. It would have seemed very strange also to Marshal Foch, to Joffre and Mangin, even perhaps to Pétain. How did this strange reversal come about? How did this holy alliance of non-resistance, this unholy conspiracy against liberty take place? Who is responsible? I will answer that question plainly. The responsibility rests on the revolutionary socialists of France and of all other countries. If the upper classes lost their spirit, if their will to fight was broken, there is no difficulty in finding out who broke it. It was those who denounced all arms and all wars except the last final struggle for social justice; it was those who told the professional soldiers that their occupation was discreditable, that the struggles they had endured and in which they had won their laurels were base, useless and degrading. The officers were told that as soldiers they would be put out of employment and as landlords or *rentiers* they would have their property taken from them. Often it was added that the very altars at which they practised their superstitious religion would be taken from them. Until this glorious day should come, the weapons of war should

be meted out in as niggardly a fashion as possible and the study of their use should be discouraged. When the persons thus threatened felt that they had been unfairly treated and were reluctant to fight, the authors of the threat are entitled no doubt to experience many emotions, but not surprise.

The posing of the question of socialism or communism did more than affect the military classes. It succeeded all too well in making the socialist-capitalist issue the fundamental problem of politics. All issues were subordinate to this one, everything else was seen as merely a storm in the teacup of bourgeois liberal pseudo-democracy. Whether the socialists ever really convinced themselves about this, they convinced their opponents. If you succeeded in persuading people that the classless socialist-communist state was either the best or the inevitable form of society, and in Marxian speech the two terms mean the same, well and good. But if you failed, then they were likely to think that it was the greatest possible evil. It is not surprising that many usually humane men turned a blind eye to the faults of fascism when faced by such an alarming alternative. This was so in England, where political tradition and electoral practice favoured a two-party system and the politics of yea and nay. We had only a tiny Communist Party and a large Labour Party, and the Labour Party, after all, very mild. But it did not always appear mild and it did not want to appear mild. In certain moods it sought, in Chatham's words, to be 'a scarecrow of violence'. It sought to make people's flesh creep, nor was it unsuccessful. One effect of this was to make upper- and middle-class people lose all interest in the details of politics. The word Bolshevik replaced the old terms Radical and Jacobin. In clubs and in offices there were no political issues to discuss. Either we kept the socialists out or we did not. If we did not, then national ruin in some unspecified form would follow.

The result was that the upper and middle classes were not so well informed or so vigilant as their education might have led us to expect. The bombardment of Corfu in 1923, the questions raised by the minority treaties, the profound problem of the Geneva protocol, the implications of the Treaty of Locarno, the possibilities of the Disarmament Conference and many other matters were passed by somewhat wearily. I may be exaggerating all this, but I very commonly find that when I mention many of these things to educated men of the pro-

fessional classes they cannot quite recall them. They seem very much less well-informed and less interested in political issues than my father and his contemporaries who followed so keenly the debates of Asquith and Balfour. There may be a number of explanations of this. One factor may be that they have in the last twenty years had more worries and at the same time more amusements. But the socialist challenge by uniting them all has deprived them of anything to argue about. This is all as the socialists desired. They wanted to have one simple, unavoidable issue and they were not sorry to reveal the bourgeoisie as ignorant and apathetic as well as acquisitive. But when the socialists wanted to stir up the bourgeoisie on foreign politics, to make them fight for the Covenant of the League over Manchuria or Abyssinia, it was a disadvantage that so very few had read the Covenant, or understood references to this or that article. Socialists were entitled to feel indignation at this, alarm, fear or contempt, but once again, not surprise.

The socialist thesis about peace being guaranteed by the greater importance of the horizontal class division was no more an idle dream than the ideas of those who put their trust in the Covenant. But it did require that in a fairly short space of time the principal states of Europe should become socialist. In 1924 this did not seem so far away when MacDonald was Prime Minister of Great Britain, the French socialists supporting the Herriot Government in France and Social Democrats ruling Germany. But that moment passed and never recurred. As conservative and counter-revolutionary forces gained power the prospect of peace became more remote, and the endless battering of socialist slogans on bourgeois nerves became more and more baneful. The responsible socialist statesmen indeed did not exclude the Covenant method. Ramsay MacDonald was a supporter of the Geneva protocol and Henderson in his quiet straightforward way was the best League Foreign Secretary that we had. But the more strident voices in the movement turned men's thoughts away from the business of preserving peace by means of instruments and agreements, and more and more to the question of social justice and the oncoming of true economic democracy. It is difficult in politics to think intensely of many issues at the same time. When in 1935 the socialists called upon the upper classes to quit themselves like men and stand up against the tyrant Mussolini, they were too late. They had not put first things first.

It may be thought that in stating my four approaches to the problem of peace I have missed out the simplest and most obvious, namely, the simple policy of withdrawing Great Britain from all entanglements, arming to a degree that would make us feared by possible enemies and taking no action until our own security was threatened. But this policy, although supported by Lord Beaverbrook, was never contemplated by any statesmen in office or likely to come to office. It meant withdrawing from the League of Nations, abandoning all responsibility for the carrying out of the Treaty of Versailles and other treaties. It meant losing all consideration in France, and all influence in Germany which would have been left to the mercy of France and her allies. It is quite possible to argue that it would have been the path of prudence though scarcely that of honour. But to play the Gallio and care for none of these things requires a position of unassailable security, and that we had not got. Even the United States, which adopted such a policy of isolation with as much unanimity and determination as a people can show, has failed to maintain it. Sir Robert Walpole said to Queen Caroline, 'Fifty thousand men killed in Europe this year and not one of them an Englishman.' He has been praised for the wisdom of that remark, but within twenty years England found herself facing an alliance of her hereditary enemy France and her hereditary ally Austria. It was a terrible warning. We only got out of the difficulty by making an ally of Prussia and saving that power for a grateful posterity.

The war had ended, as all wars do, with a treaty of peace. We had to operate that treaty or show ourselves as faithless and frivolous to an extent that the most deadly critics of Perfidious Albion had never yet imagined. Treaties may in the end be revised, and in the course of time provisions in them may be quietly dropped, but we could not turn round at once and refuse all responsibility for a settlement so complex and elaborate. It was a very remarkable treaty. It fulfilled our acknowledged war aims with a degree of perfection that no other European settlement to which we had ever set our hand could equal. A million of our people had died to secure these aims. Yet it was not long before it became a platitude to regard it as conceived in iniquity or wrought in folly, and he who sought to praise it had to stand convicted of incorrigible pedantry or of talking for cheap effect. How this came about is worthy of some careful examination.

## HISTORICAL NOTE I

### THE ELECTION AND THE PARLIAMENT

At the outbreak of the war in 1914 Great Britain was governed by a Liberal Administration which had been in office since December 1905, first under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, till April 1908, and then under Mr. Asquith, afterwards Lord Oxford and Asquith. A general election in January 1906 had given this government an almost unprecedented majority. Two general elections in 1910 were fought on the question of the powers of the House of Lords, which had rejected the Liberal Finance Bill of 1909. The results of these elections was to reduce the majority of the Liberal Government from 354 to 126. The Conservative and Liberal parties had an almost equal number of members in the Commons and the Government's majority was made up by 84 Irish Nationalist members and 40 Labour members.

The years 1910 to 1914 were years of very bitter political controversy, more bitter than any period the country has known since. In 1911 the Parliament Act was passed, removing the absolute veto of the House of Lords on legislation. Under this Act a Bill to grant self-government to Ireland was introduced in 1912 and reached the Statute Book in September 1914. The people of Belfast and Northern Ireland were so resentful of the prospect of being ruled by a Parliament in Dublin that they prepared to resist by force, and in July 1914 the country appeared to be on the verge of civil war. The outbreak of the European war brought about national unity immediately, and while the Irish Home Rule Act proceeded to the statute book, its operation was postponed. The Liberal Government remained in office to conduct the war, but in May 1915 Asquith, to strengthen his Government which had been severely criticized, formed a Coalition Government with the Conservatives. This is known as the First or Asquith Coalition. It lasted till December 1916, when Lloyd George forced a crisis by resigning his office, the Secretaryship of State for War. Asquith then resigned, and Lloyd George formed the Second Coalition Government known by his name. This lasted until October 1922. All the Conservatives supported it and about half of the Liberals. Another half of the Liberal Party remained aloof and this included many former Ministers. This section of the Party came to be known as the Asquithian, Independent, and later on, derisively, as the Woe Free Liberals. It gave full support to the Government's war policy, but in May 1918 Asquith moved for a committee to inquire into the alleged neglect to provide enough troops for the Western Front. The Prime Minister

made this a question of confidence and was supported by the House. This debate, which was called the Maurice debate, after General Sir Frederick Maurice, who was known to be one of the chief military critics of the Government, gave Asquith the open support of 106 Liberal members.

After the Armistice of November 1918 Lloyd George and his colleagues in the Cabinet resolved on an immediate General Election in order that he might proceed to the Peace Conference with the authority of a new parliament behind him. It is this decision to dissolve that has been so severely criticized by many historians. The Government fought it as a coalition, and both Liberal and Conservative supporters of the Coalition received a letter of support from Lloyd George and Bonar Law. The Asquithian Liberals were refused such a letter, and also candidates of the Labour Party, all but a few members who remained with the Government. This letter from the leaders of the Government was nicknamed a coupon, and so the election has been known as the 'Coupon' election. The majority of the electors supported the Government which had brought the war to a successful end, and the new House of Commons showed a very large majority for the Coalition. Polling took place on December 4th and the votes were counted a fortnight later in order that absent voters, serving in France and elsewhere could send in their votes by post. It was the newly-elected House which sat while the Prime Minister was at work at the Peace Conference in Paris. He could only make occasional appearances, and the leadership of the House was left to Bonar Law, the head of the Conservative section of the Coalition. This was more powerful in number of M.P.s and in the number of offices held, but the Liberal part of the Government, containing Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, did not lack prestige.

## HISTORICAL NOTE II

### THE TREATY OF PEACE

The Peace Conference met in Paris on January 18th, 1919. The Treaty was known as the Treaty of Versailles because it was signed there in the famous Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles where William I, King of Prussia, was proclaimed German Emperor on January 18th, 1871. The work of the Conference was done in Paris. On 30th January the mandatory system for the German colonies was agreed upon. In January the project of a League of Nations Covenant was agreed upon and completed on April 28th. The more

detailed work of frontiers and reparations continued till May. On May 7th the peace proposals were presented to Germany and on May 29th the German Government presented counter-proposals. The counter-proposals were rejected by the Allied Powers on June 16th. On June 22nd Germany accepted the peace terms with reservations which produced an Allied ultimatum, and on the 23rd Germany accepted without reservations. The Treaty was signed on 28th June and ratified on 9th July.

Austria made peace by the Treaty of St. Germain on October 17th and Bulgaria by the Treaty of Neuilly on November 27th. On June 4th, 1920, Hungary signed the Treaty of the Trianon and on August 10th the Turkish Government signed the Treaty of Sèvres.

During the summer of 1919 Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia signed agreements for the protection of racial minorities.

The Allied reply of June 16th rejecting the German terms was not a complete refusal and made certain concessions. There was to be a plebiscite in Upper Silesia to allow a frontier to be drawn in accordance with the will of the inhabitants. (This was carried out by the League of Nations in September 1920; a portion of eastern Upper Silesia was then given to Poland.) Other concessions were made to Germany on the Polish frontier north of Silesia and better communications with East Prussia were provided. The rate at which the German Army was to be disbanded was reduced. (It was not until December 1920 that it was brought down to 100,000 men.) It was agreed that the methods of paying reparations should be discussed with a German commission.

This last stage of the Peace Conference was the stormiest. It has been described as follows by Dr. G. P. Gooch (*History of Modern Europe 1878-1919*): 'On all questions—disarmament, occupation, reparations, Danzig, Upper Silesia—he [Mr. Lloyd George] proposed inadmissible concessions, apologised for doing it so late, and talked of consulting Parliament. "Our demand will upset the Government and there will be nobody to sign. The peace must be signed. We cannot remain two or three years in a condition which is neither peace nor war. If France wishes to do so, she can." The work of six months threatened to collapse.'

Clemenceau replied that France knew the Germans best, and that concessions would only encourage their resistance, while depriving the Allies of their rights. He added satirically that he noticed that British opinion did not object to making Germany surrender her colonies and her fleet. Though the American Delegation was in general sympathy with the British Premier, the President himself, anxious for the speedy signature of the Treaty, demanded no changes in the fundamental clauses, and did not insist on the financial modifications urged by his experts. Deprived of his support, Mr. Lloyd George was unable to gain all his points. 'Reason resumed

her sway,' records Tardieu gleefully, ' and the amendments vanished one after another.'

Some of the controversial points of the Treaty may be noted here :

*Belgian Frontier.* Provision was made to cede to Belgium the districts of Eupen and Malmedy formerly on the German side of the frontier. It was from these areas that the German attack on Belgium was launched in 1914. There was to be a consultation of the wish of the inhabitants and the final decision was to be made by the League of Nations. A plebiscite was taken in July 1920. In September 1920 the Council of the League assigned the districts to Belgium.

*Saar Basin.* As a compensation for the destruction of coal mines in the north of France and as a part payment towards the total reparation due, Germany ceded to France the possession of the coal mines situated in the Saar Basin, an industrial area just beyond the Lorraine frontier. The Council of the League of Nations was to make provision for the government of the area. After fifteen years a plebiscite was to be held. This took place in 1935 and resulted in an overwhelming majority for return to Germany. In March 1935 the district was restored.

*Schleswig.* Provision was made in the Treaty for a plebiscite in the northern part of the province of Schleswig where the population was strongly Danish. This was in effect executing a promise made by the Prussian and Austrian governments after the defeat of the Danes in 1864. The plebiscite was held in February and March 1920. In the northern part of the area concerned there was a large majority for union with Denmark and it was duly carried out. The southern part voted for Germany.

*The Polish Corridor and Danzig.* Poland had been promised before the war ended that she would be given access to the sea. This was carried out by allowing Poland to occupy a strip of land which was commonly called the Corridor. The Poles called it Pomorze (Pomerania). The Treaty therefore restored the map of this part of Europe to something like what it had been in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The population was mixed and the towns especially had considerable German elements. It was on this short sea-coast that the Poles later built the port of Gdynia.

*Danzig* is an ancient German Free City which had played a great part in Baltic history. It was almost entirely German. The Treaty provided that it should become a Free City again with a High Commissioner appointed by the League. This was carried out in February 1920. As Danzig's economic function was to act as the port of the Valley of the Vistula it was thought right that Germany should not be given sovereignty over the city, but the Danzigers were given self-government, with a Senate elected by popular vote.

## Chapter One

### THE ELECTION AND THE PARLIAMENT

BEFORE the Peace Conference opened in Paris in January 1919 a general election had taken place in Great Britain. Since this election altered considerably the composition of the House of Commons, and since the House of Commons influenced the conduct of the Government which made the Treaty, it is supposed that the election therefore affected the Treaty. It can scarcely be doubted that it must have had some effect, but how much it is difficult to say. However, the notion has gained wide currency that the election influenced the Treaty very greatly, that the election was a political crime, an international disaster, the beginning of a long chapter of evil. The most widely read book upon the peace, Mr. Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, takes this view, and so do some of the standard histories which cover the period. Nearly all these authors were on the Liberal side in politics and it was their personal friends and colleagues who had suffered at the polls.<sup>1</sup> Eminent as these persons are, they are not above suspicion of political bias. The effect of the election on the Treaty is matter more of speculation than of proof, but it does deserve some consideration.

While on the one hand we have stated that the election must have had some effect on the Treaty, it may be firmly assumed that the Treaty contained some elements which would have been there even if the old House of Commons had been sitting at Westminster. Somewhere between these two extremes the truth must lie. The best way of proceeding is to consider what elements in the Treaty were inevitable irrespective of the promptings of the British Government. Two things must be kept in view. (1) Some of the overruling facts of the situation in Europe had been settled by mere pressure of events. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had disappeared. The Emperor Karl had abdicated in Vienna a day before the armistice of November 11th was signed. On November 30th Transylvania proclaimed its union with Rumania. A day later the Jugoslav state

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay Muir, *Modern England, 1885-1932*, p. 420, Gooch, *History of Modern Europe*, p. 660, Spender, J. A., *Great Britain, Empire and Commonwealth*, p. 580; Gretton, R. H., *Modern History of the English People*, p. 1085 ff.

was proclaimed. Several months earlier Czechoslovakia had been recognized by Great Britain and France and the United States. On 27th December 1918 the Poles had occupied Posen, and Poland entered the Peace Conference on January 30th as a full sovereign state. All these things had happened and could not be undone unless the weary Allied armies had swarmed over central Europe redeeming the territories by force of arms. It is idle to suppose that this was possible even if anyone in this country had desired it, of which there is no sign.<sup>1</sup> (2) Again, the Treaty was the work of many powers, and above all of the big five—U.S.A., Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The British delegation could by no means work its free will on all matters. Then we must remember that the Allied war aims had been stated and were expressed most notably in President Wilson's Fourteen Points. To these we had in general assented and by them we were supposed to be bound. Nor were they a peculiarly American idea ; they corresponded to the general views which British statesmen had been formulating on their own initiative. In 1917 Mr. Balfour had written a memorandum for the Cabinet in which he had anticipated the rise of the succession states and many other supposedly Wilsonian ideas.<sup>2</sup> On the 5th of January 1918 Lloyd George had outlined war aims to a meeting of trade unionists at the Caxton Hall. Here are some of his points : 'A great attempt must be made to establish by international organization an alternative to war as a means of settling international disputes.' 'A territorial settlement must be secured based on the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed ; and lastly we must seek by the creation of some international organization to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war.'<sup>3</sup>

There we have the main principle of the settlement. The question we have to ask is whether the new Parliament or the old Parliament was likely to carry them best into operation so far as the British delegation could make its opinion prevail.

The Parliament that was sitting when hostilities ceased in

<sup>1</sup> It might seem unnecessary to recite all these obvious facts, but they are often overlooked and not merely by the vulgar. Mr. Walter Lippman, the famous American sociologist, in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* in Feb. 1942, stated that he had just realized that the authors of the Treaty at Paris were not free to order the whole of Europe and that they had to take many things as settled. If so celebrated and so gifted a person has been nursing this elementary error for over twenty years, then less instructed people may require a reminder.

<sup>2</sup> *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, vol. II, p. 877.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. V, p. 2487.

1919 was very old. It had been elected in December 1910, its primary purpose being to pass the Parliament Act restraining the powers of the House of Lords. It should by the provisions of the Act have been dissolved in 1915, but because of the war it was prolonged from year to year. A new franchise act had given the vote to all adult males and to women over thirty. The arrangement of constituencies which had lasted since 1885 had been subjected to a thorough redistribution. Thus boroughs like Durham, Windsor and Winchester were no longer parliamentary boroughs, but merged in the surrounding county, while Glasgow had risen from seven to fifteen seats, and Birmingham from seven to twelve. The presumption was therefore overwhelmingly in favour of an election at the earliest moment. It may be said that this is rather a formal and pedantic view, and that if the House of Commons still fairly represented the nation, the rest did not matter. But the House of Commons almost certainly was not representative of the nation in 1918. In terms of parties the Liberals and Conservatives were approximately equal; the Labour Party had forty seats and the Irish Nationalists eighty seats. This put the Conservatives in a minority, but they felt themselves to be in a majority in the nation, as the election of 1918 proved. From the moment war broke out what may be termed the *furore populi* was on their side. They were then, and we must firmly remember the fact, the party for a spirited foreign policy; they had always pressed for higher Navy estimates, for more armaments and, when the stress of war came, were in a position to say, 'I told you so'. The Liberals had, it is true, prepared for war with much skill and left us in a much stronger relative position than in 1938 and 1939. They had produced great service ministers, Haldane and Churchill. But they approached the question of armaments with a certain shrinking, and a group of Liberal M.P.s had tried more than once to reduce the defence estimates. There were certain pro-German elements in the party, especially in the City of London and in Manchester. Some Liberals had a strong isolationist tradition, such as the members of the Cobden Club, who were not really pro-German or pro anyone else, but who, bracing themselves to resist jingoism at all times, made it their business to cultivate the friendship and extol the merits of that nation whom the Jingoes declared to be our appointed enemy. It had been Russia and it had been France. In the years before 1914 it was Germany. Thus in many ways the Liberals were despised

and hated by the more spirited elements of the population. But the division between the parties was not the most important dividing line in that House of Commons by 1918. Either you were for or you were against the Lloyd George Coalition Government. About half the Liberals followed Asquith into formal opposition ; the rest were Coalition Liberals. The Labour Party was divided into 'sane' Labour members who supported the war effort and some of whom took office, and pacifists like Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden. In the view of popular feeling at the end of the war, the pacifists had no business to be in Parliament at all ; they were rats to be hunted into their holes. In the old House Labour was quite overshadowed by the Asquith Liberals, who, it was suspected, could win little more support than that of a rump of indoctrinated partisans in their constituencies. To the rising young socialists they were just former things that had to pass away. To the Tories they were a lot of pedantic, peace-at-any-price, disloyal fellows, who had failed to prepare for war or to conduct it efficiently. They had been big men in the bad old days of 1906, but they had no right to speak for the country now. Speaking early in the session of 1919 a Tory, Brigadier-General Page-Croft (now Lord Croft) mentioned the names of some of those whom he regarded as the worse type of pacifist crank, Asquith, McKenna, Runciman, Henderson, MacDonald. 'It is very delightful to have been able to mention their names in this House.<sup>1</sup> These men . . . were not defeated at the polls but squelched. Why did they rally to the proposal ? [i.e. the placing of conquered German colonies under League of Nations mandate]. Because they saw it was unnatural.'<sup>2</sup> This was the authentic voice of triumphant, nationalist Toryism. It is useless to point out that high Conservative leaders always respected Asquith, that Mr. McKenna later became the much admired chairman of the Midland Bank, and so on. Page-Croft represented the crude, philistine spirit of John Bullish nationalism. He was speaking for millions.

Now the new Parliament was without Asquith and the other Liberal leaders and without the pacific Labour leaders. This was a serious loss to the Parliament both in terms of intellect and political experience. For these statesmen, to whom may be added men like Sir John Simon and Sir Herbert Samuel,

<sup>1</sup> The point of this remark is that he could only mention their names because they had been defeated. If they had been elected they would have had to be called 'The Right Hon. Member,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons Debates, 11 Feb. 1919, col. 90.

were not replaced by men of any notable talent or experience. Their victors, Colonel Sprot, Mr. T. Griffith, Colonel Pickering, Mr. A. C. Edwards, Mr. J. F. Green, Sir R. Park Goff, Mr. L. S. Johnson, were no doubt worthy men, serving honourably, but their footprints can scarcely be said to be deeply embedded in the sands of time. We must, however, ask what the Liberal and Labour *élite* would have done if they had still been in Parliament? In what way would they have helped to make a better peace? By a better peace I still mean a more generous and lenient peace. A few years ago that description of a better peace would have almost been accepted as self-evident. Now the circle has swung round again and Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill have officially promised us a punitive peace, to the extent of trying and sentencing the war criminals. The two main ideas that the election of 1918 brought to the fore, and a study of election speeches amply confirms this, were the trial of the Kaiser, and making Germany pay for the war. Now Asquith and his colleagues in their election speeches approved of the proposal to bring the war criminals to trial. They also agreed that so far as possible the enemy ought to pay for the cost of the war, although they spoke with less confidence of the possibilities of getting enormous sums. Mr. Keynes, in his book, justly observes that in this respect they did not go down with their flags flying very gloriously. It may be said that they made these admissions under the pressure of the electoral storm and that if they had sat on in Parliament they would have been free men and not under electoral duress. This supposition is distinctly insulting to them and probably unfair. But even if, during the election, they were like reeds in the wind, the wind would have blown upon them in Parliament too, since the election was still to come and, if they wanted to curry popular favour, they would have had to be very guarded, to say the least, in suggesting that the war-criminals should not be tried and reparations should be abandoned or cut down to a derisory sum. A terrible storm of public passion would have beaten on Parliament if it had not been dissolved. 'The old gang', as Asquith and his friends were called in the popular press, would have been bitterly disliked, much more so than when they were defeated candidates and therefore harmless. And even if they had spoken out loud and clear, they were not in office. They had to convince the Government and its well-disciplined supporters in order to have any effect on the Treaty, and the

Government had to convince the French and the Belgians whose territory had been ravaged and whose case for reparations was strong. Even if this little group of distinguished Liberals, hated in the clubs, laughed at in the pubs, had convinced their opponents in Parliament, and if Parliament had survived the storm of popular fury, the figures floating in the minds of Frenchmen would have been large enough to raise all the trouble that reparations actually did raise. It would have been necessary for Britain not only to make a noble renunciation of all claims to payment, but to force the French to ask for very little. It could not have been done, nor did the people of England want it done. It must be remembered that our ally France was popular, admired. The nation that had saved us at Verdun, the nation whose army in April 1918 'were advancing rapidly and in large numbers to our assistance', in the words of Haig's great order of the day, that nation whose claim to our gratitude was as strong as that of the defenders of Stalingrad to-day, was entitled to our sympathy and assistance at the Peace Conference. We had yet to perform the great volte-face in our national sympathies in which we made an advance upon Christian ethics by not merely forgiving our enemies but even hating our friends.

There are, however, two important admissions to make. Asquith might have performed a notable service in explaining, with the power and clarity which he beyond all others could command, the enormous difficulties of transferring large sums through the exchanges from one nation to another. We know that he wanted to go as a delegate to Paris, specially in order to have some influence in the reparations question. It is also possible that the change in public opinion, the detumescence from extreme jingoism which set in by April 1919 and was marked by the return of the Liberal Commander Kenworthy for Central Hull against Lord Eustace Percy, might have given more power to the moderate cause, and Asquith might have anticipated some of the educative work performed later by Mr. Keynes in his famous book. On the other hand, if there had not been the escape-valve of the election, popular feeling might have remained for longer in its hot-blooded state.

It has to be remembered that it was not only the Page-Crofts and the Horatio Bottomleys, and Lloyd George, in timid subservience to them, who thought of trying the Kaiser. It appealed even to men of higher principle and, since principles are more

durable than passions, it is not surprising that those who made most of 'Hang the Kaiser' at the election were losing sight of it eight months later, while in the final debate on the Treaty in July 1919 it was Lord Robert Cecil and the Liberal leader, Sir Donald Maclean, who were careful to say that they hoped the matter would not be lost sight of.

As one writes on this question one feels it to be somewhat musty and tedious, an inquest into the flogging of a dead horse. But it is not so. Astonishing as it would have seemed five years ago, it is a live issue. The received doctrine of our Government to-day is that the project must be attempted once more. The new war criminals must be tried, more and greater criminals for more numerous and more hideous crimes. To advocate the trial of Hitler and Goering is not to admit that it would have been right to try the Kaiser ; the burden of responsibility is not the same and the crimes are in some ways different ; but anyone who now even considers the idea of trying Hitler can no longer consider that to try the Kaiser was entirely absurd. One difference may be noted. The conception of trying the Kaiser perplexed many lawyers by the sheer juristic difficulty of forming the court and framing the indictment. Hitler, now a judge himself, has given rulings *ex cathedra* against being guided too much by legal subtleties. Jurisconsults may perhaps take this into consideration. Personally, after twenty years intermittent reflection, I cannot make up my mind on the question of whether it would have been wise or foolish to try the Kaiser. But I cannot condemn it out of hand as merely vulgar and absurd.

One common error about the trial of the Kaiser should however be noted. The idea was not picked up in the gutter by Lloyd George. The popular cry enhanced it, but did not invent it. A future Lord Chancellor, Sir F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), was advocating it in legal publications in the closing months of the war. A Lord Chancellor actually in office, Lord Finlay, on the eve of the armistice in a public speech gave his authority to the project of trying war criminals. A future Lord Chief Justice, Lord Hewart, was one of a committee which advised in favour of the conception. Who was the little attorney of Criccieth to withstand such weighty opinions ? Some years later when radical publicists and the revulsion to which all political ideas are liable had made the idea of trying the Kaiser a by-word in vulgar folly, Conservatives were accustomed to suggest that they, educated, enlightened, well-bred, had had

no part or lot in such common fallacies. This is not true. Individuals may have stood out against the idea, still more may now honestly believe that they did stand out, but I know of no evidence that any prominent Conservative leader at the election declared his abhorrence of it. If Tory thought had harboured any widespread dislike of the idea, then it should have made itself heard in the House of Lords. A small number of peers with all the leisure available for debating in that august assembly could easily have made their protest. They had no infuriated electoral mobs to face. But the case against trying the Kaiser was made in the House of Lords by two Nestors of Liberal Jurisprudence, Lords Bryce and Buckmaster. They asked most disturbingly who were to form the court and what would be the effect on public opinion if the verdict were 'Not Guilty', for a trial implies the possibility of more than one verdict. The Government answer to them was made by Lord Curzon. That noble Marquess still remains a slightly enigmatic figure in history, but one thing may be said about him with certainty, he was not a guttersnipe.

There is one more reflection to be made on this subject. The Kaiser was not brought to trial, but other war-criminals were tried by a court at Leipzig as the Treaty prescribed. Perhaps this was a blunder on the part of the victorious powers or perhaps the prisoners were too few and the sentences too mild. But that these trials took place is not a chimera but a fact.

If the *elite* of Liberal members who would have been available if the old Parliament had been kept sitting were not likely to have had much influence on the Treaty, on reparations and on war trials, is there any other effect they might have had? They favoured the League of Nations and the mandate system for German colonies. Could they have prevailed so far as to persuade the Government to restore completely one German colony? This might have been a healing act, a stroke of far-sighted prudence and generosity. In the early days of Nazism German refugees from tyranny were known to declare that one such gesture, then or later, might have saved the Weimar Republic. (Equally it may be argued that if it had not saved the German Republic it would have survived to be a great Nazi sea and air base and perhaps lost us the war. There have been accounts even of German missionaries in mandated New Guinea forming a fifth column for the Japanese.) It is difficult to imagine a British Parliament in 1919, new or old, making such a con-

cession. Let us imagine what would have been necessary to bring it about. The Asquith Liberals, if supported by all the forty Labour members and the eighty Irish members, might have mustered about 220 votes in a House of 670 members. To win they would have had to convert nearly all the Coalition Liberals to vote against the Government and resign their share of office. Then Asquith would have had to form a Government. Could he have done so without asking for a dissolution to confirm him, and had he any chance of a majority even if Labour made an electoral pact to avoid splitting the anti-Tory vote? It is scarcely conceivable. Then, too, in the matter of colonies we had to consider the Dominions. Neither Australia nor South Africa nor New Zealand wished to have the Germans on their doorstep, and their troops had played a very prominent part in conquering the colonies. General Smuts, who had known defeat (and could say with General Botha 'my soul has felt the harrow'), felt an honourable sympathy with the German delegates in their hour of bitterness, but he did not want German West or East Africa to be restored. In Australia Mr. W. M. Hughes was Prime Minister and he was a stalwart imperialist on such matters.<sup>1</sup>

Could there have been influence brought to bear on the territorial settlement in Europe? Could that have been improved? (Once again I mean by 'improved', made more favourable to our enemies.) It must be remembered that these questions of more or less in territory were settled behind closed doors by committees at the Conference, and direct influence was not easily brought to bear. The Allied powers all had their claims to press and when the Treaty was complete all were disappointed and could point to some land unjustly withheld from them. A speech here and there in the Commons was very far from making a decision in Paris.<sup>2</sup>

The past few pages have been a rather tortured exercise in the subjunctive and conditional moods, but worth attempting

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Gertrude Millin, *General Smuts*, vol. II, p. 244: 'With regard to the German colonies I do not for a moment contemplate their return to Germany as one of the concessions we should make.' Mrs. Millin's account of General Smuts's attitude to the peace is impressive. It shows him to have been generous and penetrating if not entirely consistent.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Bryce, in the Lords, both before and after the Treaty, made some severe criticisms of some parts of the territorial settlement. They were embarrassing to the Government spokesman who had to speak his brief, prepared no doubt in the Foreign Office, while often Lord Bryce had been for a walking tour in the district concerned and was therefore inclined<sup>4</sup> to back his own judgement.

since the critics of the election have implied that in various ways we should have had a better Treaty without it. It is a speculative problem not subject to historical proof. I have submitted some considerations tending to the belief that the Treaty would not have been greatly different. Before we return to the indicative, however, there is one more speculation which has been made. It has been suggested by various writers<sup>1</sup> that in the day or so after the Armistice there was a golden opportunity for preparing the public mind on the question of peace. After the first delight of the news of the Armistice had passed, the country, it was said, was in a solemn, sober mood and would have responded to a generous appeal for real conciliation with the enemy. A public statement should have been made that we sought no indemnities and demanded no vengeance, that after an equitable revision of frontiers and certain measures for security we would without delay knit up those common elements in the civilized life of all nations, victor or vanquished. Such a solemn declaration might have committed the Government to wise courses in a way that it could not afterwards entirely evade, and public opinion might have been pegged at a higher ethical level. How this may be I do not know. I can only say that many serious and thoughtful men think that it is true. It could not have entirely prevented some considerable outburst of jingo sentiment. It would have meant that many persons would have had to abandon cherished projects such as trials of war criminals, which as we have seen had already interested some high personalities in the legal world. Nor is it quite conceivable that the cost of the war could have escaped notice. Income tax stood at six shillings in the pound, an unheard of burden. The National Debt stood at about eight thousand millions, ten times more than before the war and ten times more than after the Napoleonic wars. Not many people paused to reflect that we were at least ten times wealthier than in 1815. The cost of living was very high. Reparations, in the narrower sense of the word, were bound to be talked of. There were buildings destroyed in air-raids, there were hundreds of ships sunk without warning, contrary that is to the laws of war and therefore not ordinary burdens of war. Few people in November 1918 forgot these things.

It has been shown that even in the election campaign the

<sup>1</sup> Notably by R. H. Gretton, *Modern History of the English People*, pp 1085 ff

Government started with a moderate tone and then under popular pressure made wilder and rosier promises. Mr. Keynes has a story that there was an actual crisis when the Whips took fright and advised more ginger as a means of making the Government majority safe. No doubt he had good authority for this statement. The principal person concerned, Mr. Lloyd George, says nothing about the matter in his book, *Reparations and War Debts*. Lord Younger, the Conservative Chief Whip, is no more. Certainly in his famous Bristol speech of December 11th the Prime Minister did encourage the higher expectations. It would have been better if he had not done so. But he was not speaking in reckless ignorance, vibrating to the tune of his excited audience. He had caused himself to be advised on Germany's capacity to pay. He appointed a committee to investigate the subject. Here is his own description of the membership: 'The Chairman was Mr. W. M. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia, and the members were the late Mr. Walter Long—a distinguished representative of moderate Conservative opinion; Sir G. E. Foster, the Canadian Finance Minister—a statesman of recognized sanity and moderation and with great experience of public finance; Mr. W. A. S. Hewins, the economist; Lord Cunliffe, the Governor of the Bank of England; and the Hon. Herbert Gibbs, of the firm of Anthony Gibbs and Sons. These last two were specially nominated to serve on the Committee as business men of high repute.'<sup>1</sup>

This committee advised that the Enemy Powers could provide twelve hundred million pounds per annum when normal conditions were restored. At the same time the Treasury were estimating two thousand million pounds as the total sum that Germany could ever pay. It would now be agreed that Mr. Lloyd George would have shown great wisdom if he had taken the lower estimate, proclaimed it publicly and held to it firmly. To do this he would have had to fly in the face of his committee and the Governor of the Bank of England; he would have had to defy a Tory gentleman like Mr. Walter Long, an Australian socialist like Mr. Hughes, a sound Canadian financier like Sir G. E. Foster. Is it reasonable to expect him to have done so? Of almost any other man I would say, no. But one of Mr. Lloyd George's greatest qualities as a Minister was his capacity to stand up against official expert opinion. He had told the Lords of Admiralty that they were wrong about convoys and had

<sup>1</sup> *Reparations and War Debts*, by the Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, 1932, p. 12

insisted on convoys. He distrusted the War Office and did not fear to cross swords with Field Marshals. In 1909 he had poured out ridicule of the City of London, and in the crisis of 1914 had contemptuously referred to the city men as flapping penguins. If anyone could defy orthodox opinions, it was he. The pundits might scoff at his lack of a University education, the leaders of the Bar might reflect that he was only a small-town solicitor whose firm perhaps had never even briefed a K.C. in the London courts.<sup>1</sup> But people both high and low knew, or were to learn, that he had often been right, wiser about machine-guns than Kitchener, wiser about Passchendaele than Haig. Above all, he was bathed in a glowing aura of triumphant fame, the pilot that weathered the storm, the man who knew that he could save this country and that nobody else could. His political followers, Liberal or Tory, had only to touch the hem of his garment to acquire electoral merit. He of all men had the credit on which large drafts could be made.

He lost a great opportunity. But it must not be supposed that if there had been no election there would have been no gust of popular pressure. Even if in the sober aftermath of the armistice wise counsels had been made and noble resolves taken, there would still have been a popular outcry and rash and extreme demands for large indemnities. It is absurd to reckon up all the violent feeling and 'hysteria' of the election on the one hand and place against it nothing, a blank of feeling and thought. Many organs of the Press would have been in full cry and there would have been bye-elections. A few of these might well have raised nearly as much storm as the general election. Bye-elections are often fateful. The Croydon election of March 1909 and the cry for dreadnoughts, 'We want eight and we can't wait,' had stimulated the Government's Navy programme. The Newport election of 1922 resulting in a straightforward

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George's lack of a formal and elaborate higher education has often been flung in his face. He has been derided for arriving at the Conference not knowing where Teschen was. I wonder how many did know. His slip in saying that Schleswig-Holstein had been restored to Denmark instead of part of Northern Schleswig has been mocked. But the fact remains that in the crises of the last two wars our Prime Ministers, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill, have had the effrontery to save the country without the advantages of a University education. It must be admitted that things are better now. Under our improved educational system a boy of the calibre of Davy Lloyd would be almost sure to proceed to the University. His entry in *Who's Who* would read: 'Open scholar, Jesus College, Oxford. Carnarvon County Major Scholarship. First-Class Honour, School of Modern History, Stanhope Essay Prize, President Oxford Union Society.' Would this have been better in his case? I wonder, although as an Oxford Don I have no business to wonder.

Conservative victory had much effect in steeling the Brutuses and Cassiuses of the party to end the Coalition by slaying Caesar. The Fulham election of 1935 is said to have frightened the Baldwin Government into shrinking from rearmament. And at such bye-elections the Government candidate would have had to answer the question, would Germany be made to pay for the war, yea or nay? It is a fallacy to suppose that public opinion is ineffective because it is not being measured by a poll over the whole country.

But in all this maze of speculation there is one thing we do know. We know who were elected to the new Parliament and how it was composed. In terms of party it can easily be tabulated.

<i>Government</i>		<i>Opposition</i>	
Conservative . . . .	334	Conservative . . . .	48
Liberal . . . .	133	Independent . . . .	10
Labour . . . .	11	Irish Nationalist . . . .	7
		Labour . . . .	63
		Liberal . . . .	28
		Irish Republican . . . .	73

The Irish Republicans did not take their seats. The non-coalition conservatives were mostly Irish Unionists or, like most of the Independents, strong Tories in favour of a hard peace. The effective day-to-day opposition was not more than the 90 Labour and Independent Liberals. One point should be noticed. In this House of about 630 attending members,<sup>1</sup> 382 were Conservatives, that is to say, a majority of 134.

Of course, it is not enough to tabulate party strengths to understand the feeling and temper of a House. Its quality must also be assessed. Now we know very well what this House was like. It was full of 'hard-faced men who looked as if they had done well out of the war'. This remark became classical. It was quoted by Mr. Keynes in his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, and with it has girdled the earth. It has been said that the man who made it was Lord Baldwin. Now Lord Baldwin is a shrewd judge of human nature and there must have been something in it. Certainly the man who privately gave £100,000 of his fortune to the Exchequer is entitled, if anyone is, to gibe at men who had done well out of the war. A slightly different view of the matter is expressed by Mr. Lloyd George when he

<sup>1</sup> After the redistribution of 1918 the numbers of the House rose from 670 to 707. After the Irish Free State was set up it fell to the present figure of 615.

said that when he looked in front of him in that House he seemed to be addressing a Trade Union Conference and if he looked behind him a Chamber of Commerce. This may be said with some truth of all subsequent Houses, and no doubt the Chamber that rose to cheer the news of Munich did not look so very different. What had happened was that a large number of familiar, distinguished and unpopular faces, Asquith, McKenna, etc., had gone, and many new men appeared. On the whole they were much less distinguished ; no doubt a number of rather plain men from the business world or from the services had rushed rather suddenly into Parliament. Who were they and what influence did they have ?

After reading with some care all the debates in that session on the peace settlement, I cannot find that new members, hard-faced or not, made much contribution. New members have to be both brilliant and assertive to make much impression in their first session. The new members who spoke on peace terms made little then or later. If I were to mention the names of Lieut.-Commander Astbury, Lieut.-Commander Sir E. Nicholl, Mr. Kennedy Jones, Mr. Hailwood, Mr. Seddon and Mr. Lyle Samuel, will anyone now be the wiser except for journalists who remember Mr. Kennedy Jones as a power in Fleet Street under Lord Northcliffe's leadership ? They are the men who had something to say on the Peace amongst the new members. Sir E. Nicholl's speech had some significance as he declared that he would not have stood for Parliament and defeated one of his best friends if the cry had not gone round to support the Prime Minister in making Germany pay, an example of how the election brought people out into the open on this issue. He was a shipowner and may have done well out of the war. He was concerned to speak the view of British seamen, seventeen thousand of whom had lost their lives. He spoke of torpedoed hospital ships and of the *Belgian Prince*, whose crew had been made to take off their lifebelts on the deck of a German submarine which had then submerged. He stated that the Merchant Seamen's League had sworn not to sail with Germans until full reparation had been made. Although he was only an employer there is no reason to suppose that he was not speaking the mind of the merchant seamen. The other members mentioned made similar contributions demanding moral and material reparation, except Mr. Lyle Samuel, a Coalition Liberal member from Suffolk. He was a barrister and a well-to-do and much-travelled

man. His speech, much the most able of any of the new men, was remarkable for its courage. To keep receivers in Germany collecting reparations for fifty years was 'physically impossible and morally wrong'. 'War is a bad game and does not pay. We must cut the loss.' He denounced the hostile attitude of members towards President Wilson and the League of Nations. 'Every Hon. Member of this House will live to realize that if there is no League there is no civilized world.' Much of the good effect of this speech must have been lost when Brigadier-General Page-Croft, speaking later in the debate, ingratiatingly remarked that although he sat for Suffolk he might equally well sit for Wurtemburg or Bavaria.

The men who carried on the debates and pressed for prosecuting the Kaiser and demanding the cost of the war from Germany had nearly all been in the previous Parliament. Election or no election, they would have been there. Election or no election, they would have held the opinions they did hold. There is no need to insult them by supposing that they were overawed by their experiences at the hustings. Their reputation for deep-sighted sagacity may not stand high, but they are not cowards. This is who they were : Brigadier-General Page-Croft, Colonel Guinness (Lord Moyne), Colonel Burn, Mr. McMaster, Colonel Claude Lowther, Mr. R. Macneil (Lord Cushendun), Colonel Greig, Colonel Gretton, Lord Winterton, Mr. Horatio Bottomley.<sup>1</sup> These men were, with the exception of Colonel Greig, who was a Liberal, and Bottomley an Independent, quite standard Conservative M.P.s. Four have since held office. Whether they had hard faces I should not like to say ; at any rate they were old faces and should not have frightened anyone. They may or may not have done well out of the war ; most of them no doubt were conscious of many sore bereavements of friends and relatives. Most of them had military records.

The reader perhaps may ask what demon of pedantry drives me to erect this cumbrous apparatus in order to crush a cant phrase used in a book twenty-three years ago. I reply that a cant phrase is dangerous. The original remark may have been a harmless aside. (After all, we know that even Gladstone once engaged in a discussion with a colleague as to who was the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bottomley had served in Parliament before but was not in the previous Parliament, but it was bankruptcy and not lack of popularity which cost him his seat.

ugliest man then sitting in the House.) Mr. Keynes must naturally have thought it a good remark to add sauce to his treatise. But, although he is not reputed to lack self-confidence, he could hardly have known that it would travel so far and live so long and that his study of the economics of the peace would become the source through which ideas of the peace would circulate through the whole English-speaking world. I do not doubt that at this very moment in the library of some American University some starry-eyed 'co-ed' is reading about the hard-faced men who made the wicked peace, and murmuring, 'How very, very terrible.' I should be surprised if there is not a copy of the book in the German Ministry of Propaganda with this phrase underlined and indexed, 'Parliamentary Plutodemocracy, selfishness and cruelty of.' This is the sort of stuff that politics is made of, not least in these days of short wireless talks where the words go up, the facts remain below. Consider for a moment what nonsense it all is. Taken in the context of Mr. Keynes's book it cannot fail to suggest that a new class of men had entered Parliament, predatory capitalists, who made the peace with an eye to their own gain, as though reparations were to be paid to them in person. Consider its effects on generations of self-righteous young people. Naturally these phrases of Keynes's were taken up with pleasure by the bitter critics of the Government. It would be answering cant with cant to describe them as sour-faced men who had lost their seats at the elections.

The harm done by dissolving Parliament in 1918 was not so much the stirring up of vengeful sentiments against the defeated enemy. It was rather in placing the opposition forces, Liberal and Labour, in such a position that they were bound to suffer severely at the polls. It made them the victims of the popular enthusiasm for the Leader and the Government that had won the war. It diminished the chance that the Treaty would be accepted with general approbation. It made martyrs of the Left-wing leaders when some of them at least might have been induced to hold more moderate views on the peace settlement if they had not been exposed to electoral defeat in all its bitterness. It did not alter very seriously the actual terms of the settlement. But it did much to make enemies of the peace settlement and the consequences of this were to become extremely serious.

The Parliamentary session of 1919 falls into two periods.

The first part is from the assembly of Parliament to the Easter recess. During this period the greater volume of criticism, questions and suspicions came from the Conservative or 'ginger' group of members who were afraid of a weak peace. On the other hand we find men like Colonel Josiah Wedgwood applauding the resistance which he believed the Prime Minister was putting up against his jingo supporters. The Labour leaders were sensible and humane. They declared that they did not want a peace of revenge ; they wanted to send more food to Germany and were conscious of the danger of Germany going Bolshevik. Full reparations, however, were demanded. A kind of crisis came in April, when Colonel Claude Lowther made an effort to force the Government to keep its pledges and exact a large sum from Germany. He was the author of the famous Lowther telegram, sent to Lloyd George in Paris, bidding him to keep the terms stiff. This was signed by the majority of Conservative M.P.s. On April 2nd Colonel Lowther made an important speech in which he put forward his ideas on how a sum of reparations could be obtained. It is an interesting study in its honesty and in its crudity. He looked forward to a period of fifty years which would have taken us to the year 1969 and still we would be receiving large annual payments from Germany. (To put the matter in perspective one has to think of the period backwards, which would have taken us to 1869. To put it another way, the youngest member of the Parliament, Sir Oswald Mosley, if he had been granted his three score years and ten, would have just seen the end of reparations before he died. If he had only had the span granted to him in the expectation of life tables in Whitaker's Almanack, he would have died in 1959 ; ten years still to run.)

The economic arguments were refuted by Mr. Bonar Law in a cold douche of fact which should have been administered much earlier in the year. Lowther produced the usual estimates of Germany's total wealth and references to her forests, coal, potash and minerals which could be made available for reparations. What is more interesting is to observe some of the prejudices which he thought fit to import. There were the unfriendly references to President Wilson which were common form in high Tory circles. 'The higher philanthropy of that great philosopher who is able to bear with such equanimity the financial embarrassments of every country but his own.' As for the men who would mislead us by under-estimating what

Germany could pay, ' They are English for profit but so far as patriotism is concerned they are pariahs. Their names, often biblical, they prefer to change, but they are none the less dangerous.' Later, another speaker attacked Lord Cunliffe, the Governor of the Bank. We see here anti-semitism and distrust of international financiers playing their part, a mixture of fascist and communist prattle. And all the time Lord Cunliffe had signed the report which posterity laughed at for its inflated estimates. Another point of interest in Colonel Lowther's speech is his belief that the ruin of war meant poverty for either one side or another. Could we give adequate pensions to the relatives of the dead, decent attention to soldiers and sailors? Would the State be able to aid agriculture and subsidize certain tottering industries? ' If one of the two countries has to be in that intolerable financial position for fifty years I pray God that that country may be Germany and not England.'

The truth is no doubt that this dilemma was quite unreal. Lowther like many others scarcely realized how great our productive power was and how swiftly war losses would be made good. As economists always point out, in every year a large part of the national wealth has to be replaced. Roads, railways, houses, factories, vehicles, machines, all wear out. Even those stony-hearted men, the inspectors of inland revenue, realize this truth, for they allow the tax-payer about 17 per cent off the rental of his house in order that he may repair it; the economist would say *replace* it. As Oliver Wendell Holmes said of the one-horse shay :

Little of all that we value here  
Comes to the end of its hundredth year  
Without both looking and *being* queer.

This simple truth is not easy to grasp. The form which the demon of pessimism took was the same as that which has haunted this country at the end of every period of war, the National Debt. It loomed titanic and menacing over rich and poor alike. How were we to meet the interest and repay the capital charge of eight thousand million pounds? It was no minor problem, but people were too easily frightened by it, and certainly it was one of the factors which made men press for payment from Germany by any possible means. I believe that if every member of that House each morning had read Macaulay's famous passage on the National Debt in his *History*

of *England* and learned how every generation trembled at the same fears only to find them baseless, there would have been greater sanity on the subject.

There is one more observation I would like to make about Colonel Claude Lowther. Some time ago I was turning over a volume of Hansard covering the months just before the end of the Boer War. I came across a speech in which a member was arguing that the cost of that war could be recovered from the Transvaal. He refused to believe that it was poor. He spoke of the mineral deposits and other sources of real wealth that could be made to compensate the hard-pressed British taxpayer. As I read, I asked myself where I had heard all this before? Was it not the old story of 1919, Lowtherism in fact? My interest growing, I looked back to see who was making the speech. It was Major Claude Lowther (Eskdale, Con.)<sup>1</sup> I read the name with awe. So he was at it even then? Then he was a major; now he was a colonel, but his mission was unchanged and his faith undimmed. But this at least may be said: In his plea for reparations on a generous scale he was not reacting to a sudden demagogic impulse. It was an old hobby; it was a case of a fine old English gentleman doing his best in the science of political economy, never very congenial to any of them since the Whig, Adam Smith, invented it.

But it would be unfair to poke too much fun at the gallant Colonel, whose errors were no greater than those to which Lord Cunliffe and Mr. Walter Long apparently assented. The closing words of his speech are worth quoting and will command respect to-day: 'If we allow Germany the chance of completely recuperating, if we allow pity and sentiment to run riot, as sure as I stand here, *that country will never rest until it has ground us underfoot. Let us never give her the chance.*'

In spite of the menacing threat of the Lowther telegram to the Prime Minister the Government does not appear to have been greatly shaken. Bonar Law's reply to him in the debate was devastating and brought the unhappy Colonel several times to his feet, until his cousin, Speaker Lowther, had to tell him to take his medicine.

On April 16th the Prime Minister himself spoke. A large part of his speech was devoted to the difficult problem of Soviet Russia. For the rest he was mainly concerned to defend the delay in making the Treaty and the lack of publicity at the

<sup>1</sup> 10 July 1901.

conference. He quoted Asquith's speeches to show that the Liberal leader was in agreement with him about the principles of the peace, which were in effect the Fourteen Points. But Germany, he pointed out, had been disarmed and could scarcely muster 80,000 men for internal order. Europe was in a dangerous condition. Central Europe was broken up into small states and great care must be taken that no future cause of unrest should be created by the settlements which were made. He concluded on a gloomy note ; there was hunger and misery in Central Europe. The world was going to pieces.

This speech showed Mr. Lloyd George, like other thoughtful men, to be aware of all the ills of Europe, ills which existed before the Treaty and which cannot therefore be attributed to the Treaty. There was no easy optimism about his speech. In the end we cannot too often remind ourselves that all the controversy about the amount of reparations ended in a question mark. The Treaty itself stated no sum, large or small. The matter was treated and most rightly treated as a question for investigation over a period of time. In the four pages of the Treaty which deal with general provisions for reparations it is laid down that a reparations commission should be set up which was to 'consider the claims and give to the German Government a just opportunity to be heard' (Article 233).<sup>1</sup> This was particularly wise, since the economic condition of Germany was liable to change from month to month and had to adjust itself to the loss of territories like Lorraine. The war had left it badly worn. It was very far from being the going concern that France was after the hard but relatively less destructive war of 1870. The weakness of the reparations machinery may perhaps be discerned in Article 234, which stated that the commission had 'discretion to extend the date, and modify the form of payments, such as are to be provided for in accordance

<sup>1</sup> The general provisions for reparations are brief. They are followed by fifteen pages of annexes and one page of special provisions. Then there are six pages of financial clauses and twenty pages of economic clauses. The general principle of Germany's liability for 'the cost of the war' (Article 231) gave a handle to those who claimed impossible sums. The detailed provisions which follow in pages 105 to 167 elaborate the general provisions. Some of the matters thus regulated bore harshly on Germany, such as Article 252, which reserved to the Allied governments the right of disposing of enemy assets and property in their jurisdiction. Others transfer a certain share in the National Debt of Germany to the states which had annexed German territory (Alsace-Lorraine excepted because the Germans refused the concession to France in 1871). There is provision as in Annexe V for payment in kind of many articles such as coal and chemicals and cattle, economically a sensible provision.

with Article 233: but not to cancel any part, *except with the specific authority of the several Governments represented upon the Commission*'. Each separate government therefore had a veto. This enabled the French Government to object effectively to the lower estimates which the British Government, once it had disengaged itself from the opinion of Governors of the Bank of England, Australian Prime Ministers, Canadian Finance Ministers and the like, never ceased to press. This may seem to have been a grave error. But were the powers concerned to sign away their freedom to a majority vote? We have seen what Colonel Lowther felt about statesmen of other countries 'who are able to bear with such equanimity the financial embarrassments of every country but their own'. Suspicion of England in France was at least as strong as suspicion of America here. As we shall have occasion to see in other contexts, Englishmen who talk self-righteously about France have only to consider what we have had to endure in criticism from America to moderate their facile indignation. None of the belligerents was ready to abandon its interests to a majority vote. Certainly we were not. A French economist could easily have argued that we were making a mistake when we took German ships as a form of reparation payment, that it would have been better to let Germany use and man the ships and thus build up an invisible balance of payments to be placed to our credit. He could have argued that it was better for us to build our own ships and thus keep Clydebank and Barrow in employment, while providing ourselves with newer, faster, larger, safer and more comfortable vessels. There may perhaps be a fallacy in this argument. I do not know, for I am not an economist. But as a politician I know that in 1919 it would have been received with impatience and anger. In the final debate on the Treaty, Lord Robert Cecil, with his customary sagacity and foresight, showed some anxiety about the reparations commission, which he thought too powerful and too secret in its operations. He would have preferred to have had a sum stated. This view is entitled to respect, and as it is what was not actually done, it has since been highly thought of. But the sum that would have satisfied Allied opinion at the time would probably have required a reparations commission to revise it downwards. And even Lord Robert Cecil, for all his humanity, was careful to say that Germany must pay to the uttermost farthing. That was how people thought at that time. It is idle

to pretend that he learned such notions only from the raucous cries of his electors at Hitchin. This proud and high-minded nobleman, whose forbears had held lordship and dominion in the county of Hertford since the great Burghley had dominated the council chamber of Queen Elizabeth, whose family in our generation are renowned for their scrupulous conscientiousness in public affairs, he at least should be free from such suspicions.

So the reparations question in the end was provided for in the most sensible and statesmanlike manner possible. The Treaty did not prejudge all the complex and disputatious problems. A problem whose details and even perhaps whose principles could only be understood by experts was left to experts. If it be the truth that no very large sums could be paid, sums that is in the thousand million class, then it should be remembered that no such sums were paid. If it is true that Germany's economic life had first to be rehabilitated, it was rehabilitated by the Dawes and Young loans. If it be true that for political reasons reparations would have had to come to an end before long, then they did come to an end after the Lausanne Conference in 1932. All this happened before Hitler came to power. The tragedy was that the French were too slow in revising their expectations. The invasion of the Ruhr by the French to compel payment is held to be one of the turning points for ill in post-war history. But this did not take place till January 1923. There was a good deal of time to prevent matters coming to such extremes.

The thesis that I want to try to establish is this : in so far as the peace broke down in the end because of reparations, then blame does not attach to the Treaty of Versailles nor to its authors. Mr. Lloyd George is very little to be blamed personally. During the election he committed the error of encouraging hopes that were false, loosening the reins when he should have tightened them. But as soon as he addressed himself to the facts of the problem at Paris his practical genius began to operate. His flair for using the right advice came into action at once. By April he was forwarding to President Wilson a financial plan for reparations and for financial rehabilitation of Europe. This plan was by Mr. J. M. Keynes, a Cambridge economist employed during the war in the British Treasury and financial adviser to our delegation at the Peace Conference. The Keynes plan was not accepted, and Mr. Lloyd George has shown, in his *Reparations and War Debts*, how the American

delegation opposed the plan and how already the Americans refused to consider reparations and war debts as one problem.<sup>1</sup> After the Peace Conference Mr. Lloyd George was untiring in his efforts to secure a settlement in the series of conferences which took place. He could not reduce the French demands, and the Americans, for good or ill, had gone. He passed from office in October 1922. The Ruhr was invaded four months later.

I still adhere to the general view that the course of wisdom was to make the payment of reparations a fairly rapid and easy business and to accept only a small sum, treating the Treasury's figure of two thousand million *in toto* as an absolute maximum. I suppose I am right in this. Academic economists always thought so.<sup>2</sup> Men of business came round fairly soon to their view. I suppose them to be correct. But in these days opinion whirls so quickly that a writer on politics must be like a modern tank and have a turret that can swing round in any direction. The 'rigid, bitter, narrow, unrelenting' French view may come into fashion once more. Our enemies have taught us that transfer of wealth in materials and labour can be carried out by crude methods, without straining the equipoise of the exchanges, just as they have shown us more radical methods of dealing with national minorities than the guaranteed treaty rights which we attempted to prescribe in the last post-war settlement. People may say that we have much to learn. Yet our official view in our German broadcasts is that we will not seek the economic ruin of Germany. They may build up their wealth but not their armed power. They are to have the opportunity of acquiring wealth and living the good life as peaceful states conceive it. But they are to live it minus armaments and plus personal freedom, both of which circumstances they will probably dislike. This is what we offer in our German broadcasts. As far as can be seen we shall be bound to adhere to these terms. In any case, the photographs of industrial Germany which our papers publish should dispel ideas of making Germany a source of wealth in the form of reparations. There may perhaps have to be a category of 'loot'

<sup>1</sup> *Reparations and War Debts*, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Hewins, who signed the Hughes Report, was, it is true, a distinguished academic figure, sometime Director of the London School of Economics. But he was mainly an economic historian. Economic historians can be and often are protectionists. Professor Hewins was a keen protectionist politician. This may be right or wrong, but it placed a great gulf between him and the economists proper.

from the occupied countries, railway material, works of art, etc., which will have to be restored. After the last war also we were bound to give the Germans the chance of achieving decent economic conditions, and we did it to some extent at the cost of British and American capitalists who subscribed the necessary loans. The consequences of Wilson's Fourteen Points, when unfolded in practice, horrified the Germans, who seem never to have understood their implications,<sup>1</sup> such as the loss of great territories to Poland. We could not add economic ruin to the other hardships, except in so far as reparations imposed it on them. But as everyone learned in the end, economic ruin and reparations were contradictory policies. Therefore we may hold fast to the belief that the policy of large-scale reparations is and was wrong.

As we have already seen, the territorial settlement was not much discussed in the House of Commons, because it was not really a suitable matter for discussion. The principle of self-determination had been laid down in advance of the Conference, and the governments of what came to be known as the Succession States—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, Rumania—were putting it into operation. The Conference had to deal with all the debatable questions and they were weighty, but, since no one government was a free agent, dangerous to discuss. Nor was there much to disagree about. To the Tories these states were our allies and therefore their claims should of course be supported. To the Liberals they were 'peoples rightly struggling to be free', and by all good Liberal principles should command our sympathy. Sometimes a member with special knowledge would be worried about a particular area, as Lord Bryce was in the Lords. Thus a Conservative, Major Newman from Harwich, asked about the fate of the Southern Dobrudja, which he claimed was Bulgar and should not go to Rumania. At once the member for Horsham, Lord Winterton, arose to remind the House that Rumania was our ally, Bulgaria our enemy. This, apparently, settled the matter for him. There is nothing surprising about this. During and just after wars we think like that. It is only in between wars that we attain to objectivity in the matter, and then such is the generosity of

<sup>1</sup> Professor D. W. Brogan, in *The Development of Modern France*, writes 'Faced with defeat, the rulers of Germany, that is the army leaders, had surrendered on terms which were extremely onerous and whose character they did not realize. That Ludendorff had not read the Fourteen Points was bad enough, but neither had Clemenceau' p. 547.

our national character that we tend to lean in favour of our former enemies. That our allies should use hard words about this kind of attitude is inevitable but unfortunate. There were some references to the Polish question and to Danzig. Not merely the Irish Nationalist member for Liverpool, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, but others favoured the cession of Danzig to Poland as the only available port. The final decision to make it a Free City was in fact a concession made in the face of our nationalist feeling.

Up to and including the month of April the Government was supported by the Liberal elements in the House. On April 16th Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, usually sparing in bouquets to the Treasury Bench of any party, declared himself satisfied. 'In spite of all the yapping of the Press and the telegraphing of his [Lloyd George's] followers he has maintained an even course, absolutely in accordance with his Liberal past, in backing up the ideas of President Wilson and doing his best to re-establish the world on a basis of justice and self-determination.' But in the same debate a new note was struck by Commander Kenworthy, who had just won a striking victory in Central Hull against a distinguished Conservative opponent, Lord Eustace Percy. Part of his success was due to his firm opposition to the retention of conscription, but he fought the election also on the peace issue. After his defeat Lord Eustace felt bound to say that 'Germany must not be encouraged to think that the people of England were weakening.'<sup>1</sup> Significantly, Kenworthy raised the Polish question, not in a friendly way. He observed that one of the first uses of freedom by the Poles was to ill-treat the Jews, and he declared that a settlement might be made in Poland which, if mistaken, would imperil the peace of Europe. A Conservative member rose at once to answer him, but the cloud no bigger than a man's hand was already visible.

After the Easter recess the position changed. The Treaty in Paris was taking shape and uneasiness began to be felt in various quarters. Colonel Wedgwood no longer smiled. He had lost his faith in the Prime Minister. On June 6th the members had in their hands a summary of the terms of peace, and Wedgwood moved to the attack. Speaking in a hostile House and with many interruptions, he denounced the peace. 'I will not make myself responsible in any way for such a peace,' he cried. The militarists at Paris had turned the peace into 'a just and

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 13 April 1919.

durable war'. He found four points contrary, in his view, to the terms of the Armistice and which could never be sustained by a League of Nations. These were : (1) The provisions for the Saar Territory. (2) The occupation of the Rhineland. (3) The lack of self-determination in the border districts of Poland. (4) Dismemberment of the Turkish parts of the Turkish Empire. From now on he was the Treaty's most relentless opponent and remained so until that day in August 1939 when, in a House shocked and subdued at the actual advent of war, like the brave soldier that he was, he roused his fellow members with a manly and stirring speech in which unerringly he placed his finger on the chief fallacy of pacifism, that wars settle nothing.<sup>1</sup>

From this time onwards Wedgwood and Kenworthy were the confirmed and tireless opponents of the peace settlement. All through the next session they kept it up, the number of their interventions on foreign affairs amounting to some hundreds of entries in the index to the Parliamentary debates. They were not the only critics. Most people had some fault to find and some condemned it generally. Many radical journalists and politicians condemned it bitterly ; some had decided to oppose it before the Conference met, since they held that such men as governed its deliberations could not but do harm. But the great majority of the conservative, professional and middle classes in the country were not ill-satisfied with it, and the outcry against it came only from the Left. If we ask who first in Parliament began and maintained with force and with courage the assault on the Treaty, the answer is two men, Wedgwood and Kenworthy. If credit is due they must receive it ; if censure is due it must fall upon them. They are with us still.<sup>2</sup> As Lord Wedgwood and Lord Strabolgi in the House of Peers, they are unwearied in what they think is well-doing, still pursuing the electric hare of injustice and scandal round the smooth course of Westminster, the one foreboding the harsh hand of British Imperialism in Abyssinia, the other encouraging the Americans with revelations of the decadent and undemo-

<sup>1</sup> 'I disagree with those who say that the end of a war is the same thing for all. If we had been defeated in the last war we should be in the same state as the Czechs to-day' House of Commons Debates, 24 August 1939, col. 24

<sup>2</sup> This passage was written before the end of 1942, when the late Lord Wedgwood was still active in the debates of the House of Lords. I have not thought fit to rewrite the following slightly satirical passage, since I cannot think that so frank and fearless a public man as Lord Wedgwood would have much sympathy with the cant of *de mortuis*.

cratic spirit of the officers of our Army. No bushel dims the brightness of their light, no serried ranks of orthodoxy affright their vital spirit. They have been young and now are old, they were Liberals and now are Labour, commoners and now peers, they have helped to compass the defeat of Germany, they have called for justice for her wrongs, now again they strive for her downfall, outstanding examples of that perplexing type, the English gentleman, radical and rampant.

The publication of the summary of the terms of peace set all prospective critics on the watch. It was not generally known that Lloyd George at Paris was carrying on a struggle behind the scenes with the French Government. He had studied and been impressed by the formidable critique and counter-proposals which the German Government had presented to the Allies. A plebiscite was to be held in Upper Silesia and the western frontier of Poland was modified in some places in favour of Germany. A German commission was to be called in to discuss the methods of paying the indemnity. These concessions were of great importance, since they removed the gravest and most obvious objections to the Treaty and enabled many to accept it who would otherwise have opposed it. Because these proceedings were private the public at home scarcely understood that the Prime Minister had started on his long quest of what was later called appeasement, in this case appeasement proceeding not from weakness but from strength. No one could then know that Woodrow Wilson within a few months would be struck down by paralysis. Still less did people think that Lloyd George, who in his steadfastness and skill in conducting the war had rivalled Chatham and anticipated Churchill, would three years later pass from office never again to be entrusted by his then admiring countrymen with the helm of government. Stranger still would it have sounded if anyone had said that from 1923 to 1937 the country would be ruled in turn and then in concert by two men, one the Financial Secretary of the Treasury, Stanley Baldwin, the other the defeated Labour candidate for East Leicester, James Ramsay MacDonald. Truly, as Gladstone once observed, it is difficult to be sure of anything in public life.

But before we leave the question of the Parliament and the peace it is worth while to study what was actually said of it in the solemn and formal debate upon it. Some day we shall have to debate another peace, as we hope, of our making and

not our enemies'. If it is based on the Atlantic Charter it may not be so different from the former peace, except that Russia's vacant chair will this time be filled. The young should not disdain to know what their parents thought ; the more mature should not fear to listen to their former selves.

On July 3rd came the great day of the presentation of the peace terms to the House. Mr. Lloyd George now enjoyed a great triumph after all his arduous labours ; he was still at the height of his power and the great mass of the public was willing to accept the Treaty as he brought it and even to visit with resentment those who dared to mar the harmony of the occasion by discordant tones of criticism.

He claimed that the Treaty which he brought was ' stern but just '. ' The terms are in many respects terrible terms to impose upon a country, but terrible were the deeds which it requites. . . . Still more terrible would have been the consequences had they succeeded.' Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig-Holstein, Poland and Danzig were the points in the Treaty which were challenged, but he was prepared to defend them. ' I ask anyone to point to any territorial change which we have made in respect of Germany in Europe which is in the least an injustice judged by the principle of fairness.'

On reparations he held that the only limit was Germany's capacity to pay. ' No one who does not believe that the justice of the war was on the side of Germany can call this unjust.' As to the colonies, if we returned them ' we should have widened the area of injustice in the world '. The Kaiser was to be tried in London and proceedings were to be taken against the other war-criminals. ' War ', he exclaimed, ' is horrible enough without these unlicensed infamies.' Other acts of injustice rectified in the Treaty were the Treaties of Bukarest and Brest Litovsk which Germany had imposed on Rumania and Russia. The rivers which ran through Germany were to be internationalized.

He then asked the question : ' Are the terms cumulatively too crushing ? ' He reminded the House that Germany had planned the war and prepared for it for years. Our policy now was to say, ' Go and sin no more.' Germany, after all, had suffered less than her victims. ' Louvain is not in Prussia, France is not in Pomerania, the devastated territories are not in Brandenburg.' What other policy was there ? It was to treat Germany as Rome had treated Carthage, or Prussia had treated Poland. But, ' we have not soiled our hands with

Prussian methods in dealing with Prussia.' Our method was to compel Germany, so far as it was in her power, to restore, to repair, to redress ; to prevent recurrence of the crime and to set such an example as will discourage ambitious rulers from ever attempting to repeat this infamy. The German nation, he reminded the House, had approved and applauded the war.

Finally he turned to the guarantees for the execution of the Treaty. These were the reduction of the German Army and the abolition of conscription, the occupation of the Rhine and the British and American guarantee of defence to France. He defended the latter step from the accusation that it showed lack of faith in the League. 'On the contrary, the League of Nations will be of no value unless it has behind it the sanction of strong nations.' Later on Germany should be admitted into the League. He referred also to the Mandate system and to the Labour provisions of the League, and concluded with an appeal for unity and constructive effort.

Mr. Adamson, the Labour leader, then made a speech of very moderate criticism. There were certain features with which Labour did not agree. These were four in number : (1) The exclusion of Germany from the League. (2) The absence of a general abolition of conscription. (3) They did not agree with all the territorial adjustments. (4) Provision for disarmament. Lloyd George interrupted, pointing out that this was contained in the League, to which Adamson lamely retorted, 'But not in the way that Labour would like.'<sup>1</sup> He concluded with a plea for 'magnanimous reconciliation'.

The next speaker was Sir Edward Carson, who must have surprised his enemies on the Radical benches by declaring : 'My belief is that the greatest achievement of this war may turn out to be the League of Nations.' But, he added, its growth must be slow and gradual. The Treaty in general was 'a great monument of patience and sagacity'.

The House did not debate the Treaty again until July 21st, when all variations of opinion were expressed. Sir Donald Maclean opened it with a high tribute to the Prime Minister and agreed that the war aims originally formulated by Asquith

<sup>1</sup> This personification of 'Labour' was very common in the years just after the war. Mr. Clydes demanded representation of 'Labour' at the Peace Conference. The Trade Union representatives in the Labour Party always tended to think of Labour as an *estate* of the nation, whose rights had to be satisfied. This goes far to explain their failure to achieve the full political leadership of the nation.

were satisfied. But he pointed out that to secure reparation we must be willing to trade with Germany. There should have been a definite sum named in the Treaty. How were we to get £20,000 millions? He still approved of trying the Kaiser, although he had now to admit that there he differed from many of his friends. He had doubts about some parts of the territorial settlement. The Polish Corridor was a dangerous experiment, and even Alsace-Lorraine was complicated by the provisions for the Saar territory. The League of Nations was a shining hope.

Mr. Clynes, for the Labour Party, spoke with great moderation. He urged that the League should not be a League of Conquerors and he advocated the general abolition of conscription. Mr. G. N. Barnes, who had separated himself from his Labour friends by remaining in the Cabinet and who was one of the signatories of the Treaty, answered for the Government. He denied that a figure of £20,000 million was contemplated and expressed the hope that Germany would soon be in the League.

A more strident note was struck by another Labour supporter of the Government, Mr. Seddon. He believed that the great mass of the people wanted the Kaiser tried. 'The only problem is where shall his remains go to?' An Hon. Member: 'Put them on the pictures.' Mr. Seddon: 'It will be a gruesome picture.' He doubted whether the League would be efficient, but he considered the Treaty a great monument of patience and sagacity.

Lord Robert Cecil, who was already recognized as one of the parents and the leading advocate of the League, then spoke. He, like the Liberal leader, Maclean, believed that the Kaiser should be punished, but had doubts about the procedure to be used in dealing with him. He emphasized the good points of the Treaty; Poland independent, Alsace-Lorraine and Schleswig restored, the German colonies; 'These are all matters on which none of us has any doubts.' But he had misgivings about the Polish Corridor, fearing that it might lead to trouble, about the occupation of the Rhine bridgeheads, and the Saar. On reparations he echoed the general view that Germany must pay to the uttermost farthing, but somewhat inconsistently objected to leaving the amount indeterminate. He thought the reparations commission had been made too powerful and its operations too secret. Then, with characteristic humanity,

he drew attention to the 140,000 milch cows which had been taken from Germany and spoke of the danger caused thereby to the health of German children. For the future he put his trust in the League and courageously quoted Nurse Cavell's words, 'Patriotism is not enough'. He hoped that in time the Treaties would be revised and that in spite of difficulties disarmament would be effected. He saw the danger to the League in militarism and in '*the whole tendency and tradition of the official classes*'. Of all the people who spoke that day, none foreshadowed so clearly the general lines of policy to which he himself would adhere for fifteen years to come.

But now another very different figure appeared. Mr. Horatio Bottomley moved an amendment regretting the omission of binding financial obligations on Germany. The Government and members of the House were all pledged to this. All the Allies were getting something, England nothing. Still, he comforted himself with the hope that before we got far with the German colonies as mandatories, the League would come to an end, and he congratulated Lloyd George on his acumen. As to the debt owed to us by the Allies, he suggested that it be transferred to the United States in payment of our own. As for the German children referred to by Cecil, he was sorry, but would rather they starved in Germany than elsewhere. He concluded his cynical and disconcerting speech on a more emotional note with a quotation from Kipling :

These were our children who died for our lands :  
They were dear in our sight.  
We have only the memory left of their Home,  
Treasured sayings and laughter.  
The price of our loss shall be paid to our hands,  
Not another's hereafter.  
That is our right.

Colonel Lowther, so prominent in the spring of 1919, followed with an attack on the Prime Minister's advisers and the forces of international finance ; he quoted Balfour's famous outburst against the Germans on the occasion of a submarine outrage : 'Brutes they are and brutes they remain.'

The first complete denunciation of the Treaty came from the Independent Liberal, J. M. Hogge, member for Edinburgh. It was obviously 'not a conclusive peace'. He quoted in support of his view the famous letter of General Smuts stating the need for revision. Our Government and the French showed no

confidence in the League, or they would not require the triple guarantee. The foundation of the League was based on the old diplomacy of the French nation. France relied on client states, and as they were weak she had to invoke Great Britain and America. There would be no peace without Germany in the League, and no peace 'so long as Germany and other nations have not come to a unanimous decision about the future of the world'. Moderate speeches followed from Colonel Hilder (Co. U) and Colonel Murray (Co. L.), but Colonel Burn raised his voice in favour of the process, so often referred to in earlier debates, of 'presenting the bill'. He did not find the reparations clauses satisfactory. German industry he conceived to be untouched by the war, and the admirable German worker could produce wealth for reparations. He concluded with the reflection: 'I cannot see why Germany should be free from debt after any given number of years.' However, he believed we should do what we could to make the League workable, but Germany should not be admitted until she had given proof and very good proof of her fitness.

Commander Kenworthy, who had not yet been three months in the House, now rose to make what was probably the most striking of all his many speeches. He was alarmed at the way in which the House was taking the Treaty and protested that only one day was being given for its discussion. He claimed to speak for a large body of opinion outside the House which disapproved of the proceedings in Paris. It is a mistake to ratify the Treaty and, if the House and the country could assert itself, the Government would realize that certain defects should be made good. Certain parts of the Treaty he was prepared to approve of. No one objected to the articles dealing with the punishment of war criminals. Nor did he object to the occupation of the Saar in itself. The Germans had destroyed French mines; the French were entitled to German mines. The frontiers in Alsace-Lorraine and Schleswig were reasonable, and reparation for France and Belgium and our murdered seamen was just. But other frontiers would not be justified. The Polish frontier should be fixed by a mixed commission. The future of Poland seemed to him terrible, placed as it was between two hostile countries of 60 millions and 170 millions. As to the economic conditions, each one was justified taken by itself. But, taken cumulatively, what did it mean for the German Government in control of the country? Germany had

lost her colonies, three-quarters of her iron and one-third of her coal. She had no agents in foreign banks and no foreign securities. As to the Colonies, the seizure of them was a just judgement, but Germany was a very great country to cut off from the rest of the world. She should have been given the mandate for the lost colonies. Portugal and Belgium had also treated the natives badly. Turning to the domestic scene, he asked how it was possible to ask for co-operation of the classes when there was this example of the treatment of a beaten foe. We should hear the Germans in council, as had been done with the French at the end of the Napoleonic wars. He ended with this warning : ' If this House takes the responsibility of blindly voting without revision the terms of this Treaty, I am afraid that this country will suffer and members of this House who are trying to shout me down will be responsible.'

After Kenworthy's speech the remainder of the debate was quiet in tone. Some interest is attached to a speech by Sir Samuel Hoare, who was then one of the rising junior Conservatives. As to his general view he left no doubt, for he supposed that no member agreed with Kenworthy. He congratulated the Prime Minister on ' the noble part ' he had played, and noted with satisfaction that all our delegates to the Conference were members of the House of Commons. '*May it be a significant augury of the increasing interest and growing control of the House of Commons over the conduct of Foreign Affairs of this country.*' He observed that the criticisms centred on three points, the weight of the burden on Germany, insufficient disarmament, failure in applying self-determination. Of these criticisms he remarked with some penetration that they confused two different phases of the situation. We were both liquidating an old world and creating a new. Both these actions had to be taken separately. He approved of the trial of the Kaiser and hoped it would come before the Permanent Courts of Justice of the League. He approved of breaking up ' the old bad governments of the past, the Hohenzollern, the Hapsburg, the Ottoman ', and he was afraid there were men who would like to piece them together again. He believed in the League. It was an Anglo-Saxon institution and he hoped that Britain and America would not retire into isolation.

The Prime Minister then replied. He was gratified with the reception of the Treaty and perceived no fundamental criticisms. He is still concerned to defend the Government against

weakening on reparations. He points out the difficulties of obtaining large sums and defends the indefinite figure. On the territorial side he explains the difficulties which were experienced in marking the Polish frontier, and gives examples of districts in which the towns were predominantly German and the countryside Polish. (Many members of the House must have had their minds carried back to the Ulster crisis of 1914, when everything hinged on the disposition of the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone, where the population problem was similar to Poland's, and the united wisdom of British statesmanship had to retire baffled.) He pointed out the guarantees for transit by rail across the Corridor and claimed that he had refused to permit the cession to Poland of Danzig and Marienburg. His speech ended in an unhappy wrangle with the Irish Nationalists.

The debate now petered out. Mr. Stephen Walsh, a Labour leader, rejoiced in the restoration of Poland, and General Page-Croft had his last fling against President Wilson and the Fourteen Points, and the forces of international finance. But he favoured disarmament, at any rate as an ideal. 'Nothing but pleasure can be given to the people of this country if complete disarmament is brought about.'

The Treaty Bill then went into committee, when there was a brief debate on the question of proceeding by Order in Council. Then came the last step. ' Motion made and question proposed that the Bill be now read a third time.' Mr. Devlin, for the Irish, moved the amendment ' upon this day three months '. After an embittered debate on the Irish situation the House divided at 2.44 a.m. on the morning of July 22nd. Only four votes were registered against the Treaty, to which must be added the two tellers, a total of six. Only two English members were in the minority, Commander Kenworthy and Mr. Jack Jones, the members for Hull and Silvertown.<sup>1</sup> The Government vote was 163. Although it was so late, and although the issue was in no doubt, that number of members patriotically remained at their post to demonstrate the power of loyalty and good sense over fantasy and faction.

<sup>1</sup> But Kenworthy was the only Englishman. In *Who's Who* I read under Mr. Jack Jones's entry. 'Born at Nenagh, Tipperary',

## Chapter Two

### THE TREATY OF PEACE

THE Allied powers in 1919 and 1920 made separate treaties of peace with the five enemy states, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. The Treaty with Turkey was revised in 1922, after the Turks, under their leader Mustapha Kemal, had driven the Greeks from Asia Minor. This was made possible by the internal divisions in Greece and the disunion of the Allies. This revision was successful. A transfer of population from Asia Minor to Greece was carried out by a Commission of the League of Nations, and Greece and Turkey became comparatively friendly with each other. The treaties with the other three small enemy states were not revised, except in regard to reparations, and these states complained with Germany of unfair frontiers and enforced disarmament. The Treaty with Germany was the Treaty of Versailles and the name of Versailles was often applied to the whole peace settlement. This was not unreasonable. If the principal military and political decisions of Versailles were observed and enforced, the other treaties were likely to stand also. Their provisions might be mitigated and relaxed by the grace of the victorious Western Powers, but Germany alone had the potential power to upset the system. The problem of European peace was primarily the problem of Germany. If Germany could be reconciled to the new European system, peace would probably be secure, and placed on a sound moral and political basis. As a second best, peace would be secure as long as the Western Powers remained united and retained the necessary monopoly of armed force. Everything depended therefore on the attitude of the governments and peoples to the Treaty, on the judgements and opinions formed on it, on the prejudices aroused by it and on the emotions which it evoked.

It is difficult to discuss the Treaty of Versailles with detachment. It was based on such important principles and dealt with so many topics, it contained so many compromises between opposing interests, that one part of it or another was open to criticism by almost everyone. (It was taken to be characteristic of any one of its three principal authors, Wilson, Lloyd George,

Clemenceau. English Radicals thought of Clemenceau as the villain, English Tories thought of Wilson as the idealist doctor who turned away from reality, Americans came to think of the two crafty Europeans who duped the well-meaning President. It has been denounced as idealistic, as stupid, as cruel and vindictive. In the Anglo-Saxon countries criticism and denunciation became the rule. Those few who held that it could, on the balance, be defended were not likely to think of it altogether calmly. The lot of an apologist of the Treaty system in this country was not easy. In the early days his Radical friends abhorred him as a reactionary, later on his Tory friends despised him as a doctrinaire or a simpleton. How this came about is discussed in another chapter. (The point to note is that the Treaty of Versailles is, and has always been, a highly controversial subject. It has been responsible for so much; it has been alleged to be responsible for almost everything that has happened since. Indeed, it is worthy of remark that many of the speeches and articles written at the time it was signed were more sane and balanced than most of what was said about it later.) The passage of time has not on the whole led to more critical and balanced views upon the Treaty, but to more sweeping observations and judgements. (That is to say, it has become a myth, a mystery and a sign in history, a blessed or cursed word which can be used to explain everything. Nor is it Hitler and the Germans alone who have made this myth. As we shall see, the Versailles myth arose in England and America from internal psychological causes without German prompting. Those who attack the Treaty commonly do so with strong over-emphasis. Those who defend it can scarcely avoid doing so in the spirit of the counter-offensive. So much may be said as a warning to the reader and an apology for the author who feels bound to take the role of defender.)

In the year that followed the Armistice of November 1918 the most pressing question for the victorious countries was to make sure that Germany would be in such a position that she would have to accept the peace imposed upon her. The Allies were tired and weary of war; they were far from united. It was essential that Germany should not have the chance of reviving her military power. The Armistice had provided for immediate security by huge cessions of arms and ships. Such German battalions as were left were required to keep internal order against Communist insurrections. But arrangements had

to be made to render Germany harmless for a longer period. About this there was very little disagreement. No one outside Germany wanted to restore the legions of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Part V of the Treaty contained the provisions dealing with disarmament (pages 77 to 96). This contains careful and elaborate restrictions, not less in naval than in army organization. Perhaps the clause that did most to make people sleep soundly in Europe for the next fifteen years was Article 198. 'The armed forces of Germany must not include any military or naval air forces.' 'Les forces militaires de L'Allemagne ne devront comporter aucune aviation militaire ni navale.' (An Allied Commission was set up to hold a continuous watch over the process of disarmament.) It was much obstructed by the Germans and one of its members, Mr. J. H. Morgan, has given a disquieting account of the difficulties. But relatively to her neighbours Germany was left in a position of military weakness, to France, to Poland, to Czechoslovakia. Germany's former allies, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, were also disarmed and ringed round by superior military force. Great Britain achieved for the time being a degree of safety that she had scarcely known in her history. The main units of the German Navy had been handed over in a moment of time. The bases from which German naval power could strike, such as Heligoland and the Kiel Canal, were put out of commission. There were no Zeppelins or aeroplanes which could fly to attack us. It was perhaps unfortunate that the establishment of French security could not be made so spectacular.<sup>1</sup>

There was, however, one danger about enforcing the disarmament of Germany. Until Germany was allowed to rearm there was no lack of the physical means of coercing her. But the political and moral conviction that the coercion of Germany was justifiable was necessary in order that power should be employed. It was this conviction that proved to be lacking when the time came. This was due in England to a growing sympathy with Germany. It was also due to a dislike and even horror of military force in any form, to what is loosely termed

<sup>1</sup> The Naval Clauses cover six pages of the Treaty. Germany was limited to six battleships of the *Deutschland* or *Lothringen* type, i.e. old ships, six light cruisers, twelve destroyers, twelve torpedo boats. No submarines were to be left and none built. The total strength of officers and warrant officers was not to exceed fifteen hundred. Any new ships built were to be limited to 10,000 tons for 'Armoured Ships' and 6,000 tons for cruisers. The Allies were to limit the quantity of arms and war materials on each ship. Docks and service ships for submarines were to be handed over.

pacifism. It is thought now that this was an error and the terms of the Atlantic Charter make it clear that the United Nations intend to keep Germany disarmed and to remain well armed themselves. But the Treaty of Versailles itself contained an indication that German unequal disarmament was not to last for ever. The preamble to the part of the Treaty dealing with disarmament contains the following words : ' In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes strictly to observe the military, naval and air clauses which follow.'

In the light of these words, and other undertakings given outside the Treaty, citizens of Great Britain and France were entitled to suppose that in due course there would be a general disarmament which would restore equality to Germany. This is what later disarmament conferences attempted and never achieved. It is quite permissible to hold that it was the fatal flaw in the Treaty. It must appear so to the ' militarists ', the believers in force. But those millions of Anglo-Saxons who learned to denounce the Treaty for its harshness and unfairness must admit that the Treaty did not envisage the permanent subjection of Germany. Nor was it mere abstract idealist sentiment which forced this preamble into the Treaty. There was a strong demand in this country, and in other countries as well, for relief from the burden of arms and the rigours of military service. It was felt most strongly amongst the workers organized in Trades Unions. Towards the end of the war Lloyd George, in his efforts to encourage the workers to carry on and to flog them out of their war-weariness, had to promise that he would do all that was possible to end large-scale armament and abolish conscription. An attempt had to be made to honour this pledge as well as the pledge to make Germany pay to the limit of her capacity. The statesmen at Paris were, as statesmen usually are, in a dangerous dilemma. They dealt with the problem by ensuring immediate disarmament of Germany and holding out the hope of general disarmament. To fail to do the first would have lost any of the three Allied governments public support ; to fail to offer the second would have been ruinous to the British and American statesmen.

Whether general disarmament could and should be carried out is a very great question. European armament policies are linked with the Far East, for Japan was a great naval and military power and European countries could not disregard

Japanese armaments or leave the problem to America alone. As time went on British opinion became more and more impressed with the implication contained in the Treaty which entitled Germany to hope that her unequal armaments would not be maintained indefinitely. French opinion was more impressed by the immediate security which the Treaty provided. But the disarmament clauses and the occupation of the Rhine-land served the purpose of giving us a decade in which there was little present threat of war. The disarmament provisions were not part of the permanent peace settlement but the essential condition of making the settlement and giving it a chance to work. The political settlement as a whole is a wider question.

One difficulty in considering the Treaty of Versailles is in knowing by what standards it should be judged. Few settlements of Europe have been so much discussed and certainly none have occasioned so much agonizing. In England the discussion came to centre round the question of whether it was fair. This usually meant fair to our enemies, although some of our jingoes, men like Bottomley and Page-Croft, thought it did less than justice to Great Britain. We had made sure of no indemnities; we had annexed no colonies. After the most complete military victory in its history the British Empire had not added an acre to its territory. Only some enemy colonies were under our control by the unsafe and new-fangled method of a mandate. But such protests were soon forgotten in heart-searchings as to whether the spirit of the Treaty had not been vindictive or whether the principles of the Treaty were not false and unrealistic. None the less, it may still be possible to ask the question, how did the Treaty serve the interests of Great Britain? Was it a compromise between French realism and American idealism, taking no concern for our needs? Or did it agree with the general principles which we have usually recognized as the conditions which make us secure and prosperous?

It is not easy to define the ultimate principles of British foreign policy, but it would be generally agreed that since the fall of Napoleon it has been true to say that 'the greatest British interest is peace'. There has also been some measure of agreement as to what we regard as the best way in which to pursue peace. Very different types of men have controlled or influenced our foreign policy, a pugnacious man like Palmerston,

a cautious man like Salisbury, a man of strict principle like Gladstone, extremely pacific men like Cobden or Morley, patient and well-meaning men like Lansdowne and Grey. About the right course of action at a given moment, about the best means to the general end, there have often been bitter disputes. None the less, there has been a certain highest common factor.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, this country has not considered its good to be dependent on keeping other countries poor, backward and uncultivated. Having possessions all over the globe and desiring to trade freely with all countries, we wanted other countries to progress morally and materially and intellectually.

Secondly, Britain does not desire to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries.

Thirdly, Great Britain should incline to cultivate the most intimate relations with those countries which have liberal institutions and adopt the same constitutional principles as we do ourselves.

Fourthly, all provisions or arrangements which favour the free exchange of goods should have our encouragement.

To these principles should be added the idea of the balance of power. This meant that we should not encourage or permit one State to gain an absolute predominance on the continent of Europe, and if necessary we should resist such a State by force of arms. For this purpose we should maintain sufficient armed power to be able to tilt the balance against a domineering State.<sup>2</sup> In this way peace would be preserved by the knowledge that at a certain point England would throw her weight on one side and so make war too dangerous for an aggressive power to enter upon. So deeply pacific are the people of this country and so unwilling to maintain armies large enough to impress the powers of the Continent, that preserving the balance has meant fighting a long war on what was at first the weaker side. None the less, there have been occasions when the threat of

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive general statement of the basis of British foreign policy was prepared by Lord Granville in 1852 when he became Foreign Secretary for the first time. It was to be presented to Queen Victoria for her guidance. It was couched in terms as wide as possible and was in some respects an antidote to the ideas of the preceding minister, Palmerston. But it represents very well the mean of British policy to which all parties could subscribe. Although there is no reason to suppose that it is used as a Foreign Office text, its principles became more and not less typical of our foreign policy as the century went on. It is cited in Temperley and Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> The actual phrase 'balance of power in Europe' used to appear in the preamble to the Army Annual Act. It was last used in 1867.

British intervention did stay a power from warlike courses. But the balance of power doctrine was not necessarily contrary to the other principles of British policy enumerated above. It dovetailed with the third principle, that of maintaining most intimate relations with the liberal and constitutional states, what are now called the democratic states. Such states are not likely to seek to dominate Europe by armed force. Freedom of debate and freedom of political association make vast and secret armament preparations difficult if not impossible. Individuals and parties are free up to the last to oppose the policy of war. It has not been with the free states that we have gone to war.

The Treaty of Versailles, therefore, may be tested not as a programme for the millennium, but by the narrower test of whether it satisfied these settled British needs. In many ways it did so. It accepted the principle of self-determination for all those nations of Europe which were clearly distinguishable and willing to live under their own independent government. In doing so it was recognizing facts. As we have seen, it was the defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary which permitted the nations of Central and Eastern Europe to establish themselves. The work of the Peace Conference was in a sense negative. It did not try to alter this state of affairs. Its task was only to make the final delimitation of the frontiers and to impose certain conditions to protect the racial minorities within these new countries. This may reasonably be regarded as furthering the progress of these nations. Nations such as the Czechs and the Poles were rebaptized into the European family. The Balkan states were enlarged and secured by the disappearance first of the Ottoman and then of the Hapsburg Empires. Such gains could not be achieved without injury to the defeated nations, the Hungarians and the Germans. This has to be measured against the amount of satisfaction caused by the liberation of the new nations. The old Austrian Empire had been a danger to Europe because of the nations which lived within it and beyond it. In 1914 it was no accident, nor to men who knew the facts a surprise, that the war arose out of trouble between Austria and Serbia. The Polish problem had been a matter of anxiety to thoughtful European statesmen throughout the nineteenth century, and the reconstitution of Poland can be regarded as a great step in furthering the welfare of Europe. The new nationally organized Europe, indeed, had many grave

defects, but these must not be regarded as a simple addition to the burdens and anxieties of the continent. They were fresh problems, but they replaced the pre-1914 problems.

In some respects there was a recession in European culture and stability. But the new states, if they could master their poverty and develop their culture, were likely to be useful members of Europe's family. Reputedly turbulent internally and aggressive towards each other, they did at least keep peace till war began in the north and in the west. It came to them ; they did not seek it. On the other side it may be said that the post-war settlement failed to fulfil moral, intellectual and material progress in many ways. The Germans who, when not being the drill sergeants of Central Europe, were its most talented and assiduous teachers and technicians, were, it was said, left with large elements of their own more cultured people under a 'ruthless, petty and vindictive nationalism'. But the treaties contained elaborate clauses protecting such minorities, safeguarding their language, religion, and education. The Germans of Posen, Bromberg, Prague, Pilsen, Laibach, of the Banat and of Transylvania were not as sheep led to the slaughter. They were to have their schools and cultural institutions, provided they remained peaceful citizens of their new State. How well or ill they were treated is a matter on which there has been some hard swearing, especially round about the time of the Munich crisis. But it should be remembered that the minority treaties were not very much invoked or supported by the victorious great powers. France hindered their application, England was not forward to press them. But the provisions were there and the machinery of the League with its minorities commission, which actually did sit, was there to watch over and if necessary enforce them. How far we should still distress ourselves about the weakness of the League over minorities is a matter of great interest to students of human ethics. Now that we know something of the way in which the Poles have been treated in Bromberg and Posen, and the Czechs and the Jugoslavs, and also the admittedly 'cultured' Norwegians and Dutch, does it greatly matter what inadequacies there were in the treatment of the isolated German communities ? I would answer, Yes ; as a study and lesson for posterity it will be of high importance. How far it should influence the Allied powers in the peace terms they impose I would not presume to say. But this may be noted carefully. British

policy not only undertakes to restore full independence to Czechoslovakia, Poland and Jugoslavia, but has applauded the many violent acts by which the oppressed peoples have wrought vengeance on their oppressors. The assassination of the tyrant Heydrich in Prague has been applauded in the European service of the B.B.C. After this war it will not be easy to hold the balance even between the claims of Germans and the claims of other races to fair treatment. Minority rights for Germans will not be a popular policy in this country, and people may think that before 1939 we were too sensitive about the wrongs endured by Germans outside the borders of the Reich. The Treaties of 1919 left them secure in their property, permitted to speak and teach their own language. The year 1939 found them still there, in Bohemia, Moravia, Transylvania and elsewhere, prosperous, organized and dangerous.

If the general moral and material progress of all countries is accepted as an aim of British policy, then it may be argued that the Treaty failed to achieve this aim because of the harm it did to Germany and the German people. It is difficult, however, to distinguish the harm done to a nation by the sheer fact that it has been defeated and the harm imposed by the Peace Settlement. The Reparations proposals took no little account of the impoverishment of German industry by the war. But as we have seen, reparations were scaled down and Germany was granted the credits with which to restore her economic power. There was perhaps moral damage inflicted by the military clauses which reduced the Germany Army to 100,000 men. It has often been observed that without the discipline of universal military training Germans are apt to lose their self-respect and suffer morally and physically.<sup>1</sup> It is not so easy to see that they suffered intellectually except in two ways. A large number of gifted and enthusiastic army officers were deprived of the only occupation which they knew and cared for and the inflation (not in itself a necessary consequence of the Treaty) bore hardly on the cultivated classes. Yet under the Weimar Republic Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein lived in Germany

<sup>1</sup> That distinguished radical journalist, the late Mr. H. W. Nevinson, in his Memoirs (*Changes and Chances*, p. 73), tells how at a time when he called himself an anarchist, he became converted to conscription. He contrasted the poor physique of the men of so many English towns with the conditions of the Germans who in the period of army service had good diet and physical training. He used to follow the German army manoeuvres and haunt the cook-houses, inducing the army cooks to let him sample the soldiers' fare. He declared 'The Army must become the University of the Poor.'

as honoured citizens. The forces which made Germany once more a military power drove them into exile. We in this country have no doubts as to which of the two régimes was on the side of moral and intellectual progress.

Nor should we forget how rapidly England began to bind up the wounds that the war had caused in the cultural life of Europe. We should not judge ourselves by the first manifestations of post-war frenzy. Cambridge, where Sir Eric Geddes screamed his famous phrase about squeezing Germany till the pips squeaked, was also the home of Mr. Keynes, whose famous book is a remarkable example of a generous attitude to a defeated enemy. Indeed, it may be regarded as characteristically English in that lack of emotional balance which made it so very fair to our enemies and so harsh to our allies and ourselves. Oxford also was prompt in gestures of friendship. The first call for intellectual co-operation with Germany came in a public manifesto by Oxford dons. It was denounced in the *Morning Post* and other strongly nationalistic organs, but its principles were soon accepted. The first student deputation to Germany was sent by the Oxford Student Christian Movement, led by an ex-prisoner of war. On an Oxford college the names of German members of the college were inscribed as having died for *their* country. When in 1929 the Rhodes Trustees moved for power to restore the Oxford Rhodes scholarships to German students, the last breach could be regarded as healed. This was, indeed, to seek peace and ensue it, to fulfill the Treaty in the best sense of the word, and no man would have more warmly approved of these acts of friendship than the most celebrated author of the Treaty, Woodrow Wilson, a man of learning and outstanding humanity.

The central part of the Treaty consists of those clauses which erected the League of Nations, which became a fruitful instrument for human improvement. Common efforts were made for the suppression of the drug traffic and white slavery. The International Labour Office was set up to bring about more equal, more humane and more salubrious conditions of labour. This was an aim eminently in harmony with British interests. This country had been early in the field with efforts to alleviate the evils of modern mechanical industry. We had factory acts, workmen's compensation acts, old age pensions and the great structure of social insurance which Lloyd George had erected before 1914. Many nations whose products compete with ours

lagged far behind us in these reforms and put us at a disadvantage in international trade. Article 23a of the Treaty bound the signatories being members of the League, to 'endeavour to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children, both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extend.' This was often regarded as idealism and so in a sense it was. But from the point of view of an English manufacturer competing with Japan and India in the export market, it was solidly realistic. Such aims at co-ordinating industrial conditions were not new, but with the signing of the Treaty and the setting up of the League they became nearer and clearer, with a better chance of being achieved. And over and above all these excellent endeavours was suspended the keystone of the whole edifice, the Covenant to outlaw and repel the maker of war, to provide the medium of peaceful negotiation and the enforcement of sanctions against the State which rejected a peaceful settlement. It was never firmly cemented in. That was not the fault of the makers of the Treaty, who passed from office while the work of fulfilment was left to others. And now we may ask the question, has any British interest prospered by the failure of the Treaty, would any British interest have suffered if the Peace Settlement had been maintained?

The second principle of British foreign policy is that this country should not intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. This set a problem not so much in the actual making of the Peace, but in the policy to be followed in carrying it out. The Treaty did, it is true, bind us to interfere in the affairs of Germany to the extent of making sure that she did not rearm. But this was a military precaution common enough after wars and comparable with the measures taken to preserve the Netherlands from French aggression by barrier fortresses in the eighteenth century or the stipulations about the dismantling of the fortifications of Dunkirk which we imposed more than once on France. The minority provisions for the new countries also meant a prospect of some interference in internal affairs, but not by British action alone. The non-interference principle usually means not interfering to favour any particular type of government, despotic or republican and so on. British statesmen have by no means observed this rule completely. In the nineteenth century Palmerston had expressed hostility to the

despotic powers and earned their bitter dislike. He openly abetted the 'liberal' or constitutional parties in Spain and Portugal. Yet our ministers have in general applied the principle of non-interference. Gladstone feared and hated Bismarck, and Salisbury was nervous of him, but both treated with him according to the politest forms. In the last war we fought with Tsarist Russia as our ally. Neither France as a republic, nor Austria as a despotism ever earned our enmity or friendship merely on account of the form of their government.

In the period after 1919 the question of non-interference presented us with anxious problems. One great power, Russia, was outside the League. She professed a universal philosophy which threatened civil war in all countries, nor were her agents and her publicity chiefs mild or discreet in pressing these principles. Yet in 1934 we welcomed her as a member of the League of Nations. In 1922 Italy fell under the rule of a man and of a party which held and extolled all those evil doctrines of violence which we imagined had been rooted out with the defeat of Germany. But we maintained relations with her and did not try to cast her out of the European community. When Germany returned to militarism we maintained to the last all the diplomatic courtesies. The case of Germany, however, is different from the cases of Italy and Russia, for over Germany we had treaty rights which permitted us to question her conduct when she introduced conscription and fortified the Kiel canal.

Our attitude towards Russia during the nineteen-twenties may be described as the minimum of association. How the blame should be attributed for this is a difficult question. Certainly neither government was friendly to the other. With regard to Italy there can be no doubt that we maintained the most friendly contacts. While Italy kept the Covenant and refrained from overt acts of war, there was no need for an open break, but equally there was no need to gloss over the bellicose philosophy which Mussolini was teaching. When in 1923 Italy bombarded the Greek island of Corfu, as a retaliation for the shooting of Italian officers on the Albanian frontier, there arose one of those cases of taking the law into one's own hands which the Covenant ruled out. The British Government's policy was to hush the matter up as quickly as possible and keep away from the League. Our own self-interest should have instructed us that a nation which by the form of its government has removed all constitutional restraints on the making of war

should be suspect to a nation like ours which accepted the view that war was an unnecessary evil.

This brings us to our third principle that British interests dictate that we should cultivate the friendship of countries with liberal institutions like our own, or, to use the modern jargon, 'the democracies'.

No doubt there are those who would stoutly deny that such a policy was wise. They might say, 'What has liberality to do with it? We want our friends to be strong, not liberal, two different and possibly opposite things. We were better off when Imperial Japan was our ally than when we cast her off at the behest of Liberal Canada and to please Liberal America. Japan is a powerful state and a great naval power. She can fall upon her rival's fleet with devastating force as at (say) Tsushima. Since international policy is in the last resort a matter of power, then let us choose our friends for their power and not concern ourselves as to whether their form of government is liberal or not, which often means little more than allowing themselves to be bullied by thugs instead of deceived by corrupt lawyers.' This is the realist argument. The trouble is that such despotic powers usually have hard terms for their alliance. Before 1914 Imperial Germany's terms were a free-hand in France. Despotic powers also prefer those military offensive and defensive alliances accompanied by concerted preparation for war from which we shrink, as the Liberals shrank from military alliance even with France before 1914 and Conservatives shrank from military and other commitments in the League of Nations. Behind all this is the lurking suspicion that sooner or later our ally will use the gains she makes by our alliance to turn upon us. But with the liberal powers we do not feel this fear; we may quarrel with them, but for a hundred years we have not fought them. Even then the realist may not be satisfied; he may say, 'Yes, we kept peace with them and did in the end fight as their allies. But what a miserable business it all was. Consider what we suffered in the last war and in this. Consider how if we had been on the side of Germany and Japan the war would either have never begun or if it had begun ended quickly. History records examples of allies more reliable in the field than France, swifter to enter it than America.'

But all this ignores the vital factor of the circumstances in which the people of England are willing to engage in a major war. To speak of politics, domestic or international, as purely

an affair of interest is as false and chimerical as to speak of them in terms of pure morality. It is a question of feeling, feeling for our interests, feeling for our duty, feeling above all for what is humane and inhumane, for what we like to think of and what we cannot bear to think of. This may be an Anglo-Saxon idiosyncrasy, policies fit only for rich and supposedly safe countries like America and England, political luxuries. We may not feel them any more when invasion is no longer a fantasy and our pre-eminence in wealth has gone. But these were the facts of politics. Before public opinion could bring its conscience to endure the prospect of war, it had to feel that war was right. In modern times such scruples made us worthless as allies to despotic military powers, worthless that is in planning and provoking war beforehand, although a despotic power might not disdain our support once war had been begun, nor we theirs. Without seeking to overturn governments that we disliked, there was wisdom in cultivating and supporting the liberal states for, as it has proved, they were the states which could tolerate our prosperity and whose alliance was acceptable to our conscience.

The policy of intimate relations with the liberal states, I submit, held good at Versailles and afterwards. A wise policy would seem to have been to act on the maxim not to intervene in other nations' internal affairs, but on the other hand to avoid cultivating despotic power too closely. Such a policy would have prevented Sir Austen Chamberlain from making a notable gesture to fascism in 1924, when Mussolini was shaking in the aftermath of the murder of Matteotti. It would have prevented such efforts 'officially to keep alive' a potential war-maker. It should have made us think less of Rome and more of Prague. If we had cultivated countries with institutions 'similar in liberality to our own', the land of President Masaryk could not have been spoken of as Mr. Chamberlain spoke of it, nor the land of Mussolini made to seem so near and dear. We know now which was our friend and which was our enemy.

It should, however, be remembered that when the Treaty of Versailles was signed and for a year or two after, nearly every state in Europe had institutions similar in liberality to our own. The institutions at least were there, although the motive power to work them often proved to be 'inadequate. The government of Rumania by Bratianu was scarcely free and uncorrupted self-government; Pilsudski's rule in Poland and the Serbian failure to co-operate with their Croat brethren were

not reassuring signs. In Greece the liberalism of Venezelos was rejected, restored and again rejected. But these states were not in a position by themselves to threaten the peace of Europe. Many of us no doubt were somewhat naïve in our expectations of a constitutional millennium. As the first President of the Turkish Chamber of Deputies after the Revolution of 1907 told Speaker Lowther on visiting the House of Commons, things were not quite the same in his country. But there was one crowning mercy, Germany at last had liberal institutions. The German Liberals, defeated by Bismarck when he defied the Prussian Diet in 1862, were in power and their philosophy appeared for the time to be dominant.

How were the principles of friendship with liberal powers to be applied to Germany? The answer in broad terms is simple. As long as and in so far as Germany had liberal institutions we should have cultivated intimate relations with her. Did the Treaty make it easy for us to do so? Here the Treaty is certainly open to criticism. We have seen Kenworthy's complaint in his speech in the House of Commons, when he pointed out that while in each single case there were good arguments to support the decisions as to her frontiers which the Treaty enforced, the cumulative effect was too severe. A very different personality, Archbishop Davidson, was making the same complaint in a private letter to Lloyd George. It is indeed the sanest and safest criticism of the Treaty that has been made. We wanted the Germans to have and to maintain liberal institutions. We should, therefore, make things tolerable to them. As we have seen, in the matter of reparations we began almost at once to attempt this. But in frontiers it was not so easy, nor in the matter of colonies, as we have already remarked, could we bring ourselves to act. This brings us once more to the eternal conundrum, could the liberal republic ever be saved? People still give different answers to this question, and many have answered it differently at different times. What we did not find it easy to realize is the meaning of the word liberal in other countries. To a French clerical or a Spanish army officer it would mean a freemason and an atheist. To a German aristocrat and in Central Europe generally, it too often meant a Jew, with all that that implies in fear, hatred and contempt. That a liberal republic seemed to many Germans a horrible perversion was scarcely appreciated. Its survival was perhaps a very forlorn hope. Yet what else was there for us to do? We had

demanded before the Armistice a constitutional government which could make peace in the name of the German people. We had got it. Not even the fiercest Tory in this country shed a tear over the abdication of the Kaiser, the Tories least of all, for the Tories in those days were good haters. And if not the Tories then still less the Liberals and Socialists. The Germany of Rathenau, Erzberger, Ebert and Stresemann was far from being the ideal liberal state, nor could she forget her wrongs, of which her defeat was no doubt the greatest of all. But while this fabric stood, it would seem to have been worth while supporting it. If it was not possible to ameliorate the Treaty by more than the concession made over Upper Silesia, if the great powers could not bring themselves to force Poland to do without her territorial access to the sea, to deny Belgium the possession of the strategic points of Eupen and Malmedy from which the invasion had been launched in 1914, if France could not forego the right of administering the Saar basin, if Italy could not endure Austro-German Union and Great Britain and the Dominions could not spare a small colony, distant Samoa, barren Walfish Bay, or little Togoland, then our policy might at least have been partially fulfilled by a more respectful treatment of the German State.

Save for the dilemmas presented by this intractable problem of the treatment of Germany, our third principle seems in most ways to have been fulfilled by the main lines of the peace settlement. There is, however, one criticism made against the Treaty, a sin of omission in the economic sphere, namely, the lack of any care to see that trade in Europe was left free from burdensome tariff restrictions. This can only be applied to Central Europe. Elsewhere the victorious and neutral powers all had their own policies to further and were not likely to let their sovereignty be infringed. But it is said that the new states whose boundaries cut across well-worn channels of trade should have been bound to allow the passage of goods across their borders. Austro-Hungary had been a large free-trade unit. Goods could pass untariffed from Serajevo to Cracow, from Kolosvar to Prague, from Trieste to Lemberg. In the new Europe these journeys might take you into two, three, or even four customs houses. This was a serious economic evil, though it must be remembered that while new frontiers were erected some old frontiers were opened. Thus Transylvania had all Rumania behind it to trade with, Jugoslavia had old Serbia,

Polish Galicia had the whole of old Prussian and Russian Poland. The states most affected were Austria and Hungary. Voices were very soon raised criticizing this arrangement or lack of arrangement. The sufferings of Vienna brought it very clearly to the fore.

It was, however, no easy matter to bind states that were now sovereign by rules that other states had no intention of accepting. Even Britain, still a free-trade country, had a Tory and therefore a protectionist majority in the House of Commons. Wilson was a keen free-trader ; many years ago on his first visit to Scotland he had visited the grave of Adam Smith in Edinburgh and picked some grasses which he pressed and sent home to his wife. But although he had courageously induced Congress to accept tariff reductions, free trade in America is always a relative matter. Nor did he now command Congress ; it was full of hard-shell Republicans about to enter on the most protectionist era in American history. They did not care how many grasses President Wilson had culled from Adam Smith's grave. France was not, as her conduct on reparations showed, deeply dowered with economic wisdom. Moreover, these new countries feverishly building up their governmental structure in new capitals, with new staffs of civil servants, had to raise a revenue at once, and much the easiest way of doing so is to impose a tariff at the frontier. House taxes and sales taxes are very unpopular, income taxes take much organization to be just and efficient. That Argus of the thousand eyes, the British Board of Inland Revenue, was not reared in a day. And if they were without tariffs, where would they get their manufactured goods ? Mainly from Germany. Were we then to condemn these new states to a limited freedom, putting them at the mercy of their enemy in respect of their trade and of the mechanical goods becoming every day more important in modern life ? Even if it was not economic, in the highest sense, they might prefer to learn to make their own goods, even if more expensively and less efficiently. Protectionist lobbying is not entirely divorced from patriotism, and infant industries were clamouring for attention in all the government corridors in Europe. They were heard even in Westminster. In their protectionism the new states of Europe were as wise and as foolish as another state nearly as new and quite as small (in population), Australia. Britain, the one power that might have attempted to regiment the new states, was not in a strong position. If you let your

own children enjoy a dangerous licence, it is difficult to control your neighbours' children. There was one other reason why little could be done in the matter of tariffs. The Peace Conference was hard-worked, it had much to do. Even if it had the power to enforce a tariff rule for Central Europe it had not the time. The peacemakers could say, like Napoleon's marshals, as an excuse for surrender, 'Nous étions fatigués.'

The Treaty, then, in spite of some excesses and some deficiencies, seemed to give security to Great Britain and to provide a basis on which with patience and skill the nations of Europe might learn to cultivate their moral, intellectual and physical well-being. Europe did enjoy twenty years of peace after it, and when war came it was because the Treaty had not been observed. The settlement rested on the assumption that Germany would not be allowed to become again so great a military power that she could threaten several of her neighbours at the same time with a probability of success if it should come to war. But there are those who say that the Treaty in its principles was so essentially rotten, its methods so absurd, that it was bound to fail. This argument has come both from the Left and the Right in politics. The liberal and radical criticism was mainly directed against the spirit of the Treaty and not against its provisions. There was a point at which the most ardent liberal became ridiculous, for it could always be pointed out that the Treaty was raised on the wreck of military despotisms whose downfall he at least could not regret; it provided for the freedom of small nations, one of his oldest enthusiasms. He might express dislike of Poland because its rulers were anti-semitic, of Hungary because its rulers were landlords, but he had to approve of Czechoslovakia which was really democratic. He might, of course, denounce all small nations as narrow-minded, un-economic, distrustful, things of the past that should give way to larger unities. But if he went so far, then he was becoming a socialist in the fullest sweeping sense of the term, a sense which does not necessarily include all members of the Labour Party.

The really dangerous attack came from the Right, in the form of an attack on self-determination. How the different political trends converged against the Treaty we shall examine in the next chapter. Here we shall deal with the general attack on the doctrine of self-determination as foolish and unreal. Self-determination has frequently been denounced.<sup>1</sup> We have already

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Carr, *Conditions of Peace, passim*.

noted that self-determination was an existing fact before the Conference met. Austria, which was the chief victim of the process, had had in January 1918 her chance of making a separate peace and, at the price of hard sacrifices, saving the Hapsburg Empire. She did not take it. Just as in 1914 her rulers could not forego the golden opportunity presented by the murder of the Archduke to wage a preventive war with Serbia, so in 1918 she could not bring herself to accept half a loaf, to say nothing about German pressure and obligations of honour to her great ally. It may therefore seem that to discuss whether self-determination was a foolish policy is absurdly academic. One may feel that there is a certain failure in the processes of reason when men discuss whether the only possible policy was foolish or not. But this may be overstating the case. If the policy of not merely suffering but assisting the new states to organize themselves as sovereign powers was so utterly wrong, then the peace-makers should have positively forbidden them to exercise full state power and prevented them if need be by force, by refusal of credit, by economic blockade and by military occupation. There should have been a great Danubian confederation, permitting national diversity but imposing economic unity and enforcing the peace.

As a more distant aim this was not far away from people's thoughts, but its establishment between November 1918 and July 1919 is a task at whose magnitude one is compelled to gasp. Who should have been its head? A Hapsburg? But not only the *bourgeoisie* of Prague but the proletariat of Vienna had shown what they thought of Hapsburgs. Who then? A member of the Serbian House of Karageorgovitch? But that royal house, although it has won through to honour by martyrdom, was not then highly regarded nor of great antiquity. A republic? But that also would have to have a head or at least a council, with every prospect of struggles for predominance. And where would its centre be? Vienna, where the last war was hatched and which is, however little we may like it, a German city? Budapest, for a time in the hands of the Bolsheviks? Backward Belgrade or upstart Prague? Men had not yet learned sufficiently the lesson of the need for larger unities. I will argue later that they may have learned it now, at least in Western Europe, but then I believe it was not even in the power of Woodrow Wilson, the most powerful didactic statesman since the Emperor Julian, to teach this lesson. More-

over, we must note that the phrase 'new states' is a loose term. Only two were new, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and of these Poland was a resurrection, while Czechoslovakia was a revival and extension of the old Kingdom of Bohemia, a very ancient element in the European polity. One may perhaps add Austria in her new shape which represented only the very oldest Hapsburg demesne. But Rumania, styled a succession state, was an organized power and in no mood to federate with enemies and rivals. Jugoslavia in a sense was new, but was based on the nucleus of old Serbia. But in Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Bukarest, Belgrade there were governments of sorts, going concerns, which practical statesmen could recognize. Like sensible men the peacemakers took their stand upon them, as a wayfarer through a marsh steps on the firmest surfaces.

Nor was it so absurd to suppose that self-determination had many merits. An organized State requires a sense of community amongst the majority of its inhabitants. The more homogeneous that majority is the safer and more fortunate the State. Sweden racially united, speaking the same language and almost universally Lutheran-Protestant in religion, is an outstanding example of a well-knit State. Ireland, with its old divisions of class and religion, was peculiarly miserable. Jugoslavia, with its Catholic Croats and Slovenes and its Greek Orthodox Serbs, its two alphabets and various cultural inheritances, was a State beset with problems. South Africa and Canada also have their two nations and their two languages and corresponding troubles. Yet all countries cannot expect to be as fortunate as Sweden, and where there were sufficiently distinguishable agglomerations believing themselves to be one nation and speaking more or less the same language, there was the basis of a state. This is how Western Europe has disposed itself in the last hundred years. Here is a brief table of the process : 1830, Belgium established as independent from the Kingdom of the Netherlands ; 1864, Denmark separated from German Schleswig-Holstein ; 1905, Norway separated from Sweden. If we look to the British Empire, which might seem to have had a special chance of creating an immense world-wide State, the same process, so distressing to the unifying school of thought, has been in process. In 1867, Canada ; 1900, Australia and New Zealand ; 1911, South Africa, and 1921, Ireland, minus the six counties, were given the substance of independence. In 1931 the parliaments of all these countries, ignoring the shocked and command-

ing gestures of an indignant *Zeitgeist*, enacted the Statute of Westminster consummating the process of disjunction. It was not unreasonable to apply the same principles to Central Europe, especially when most of the peoples concerned were busily applying them without further authority and willing to resist interference with the point of the sword. Such were the facts. Those who like their politics with more abstraction and less history will find the rational basis for national self-determination admirably stated in Mill's *Treatise on Representative Government*, Chapter XVI.

Now there are two great difficulties, I will not say to solve, for it is not always possible to find solutions in politics, but to face, in regulating nations on a basis of self-determination. The states must have frontiers, and in Central Europe they contained large and intractable minorities. This is unfortunate and is no doubt regretted by all concerned. But it all began a long time ago. That great movement of the early centuries of the Christian era which is called the *Völkerwanderung* (I use the German name, for somehow it seems suitable), was no doubt a lamentable business. It might have been better if the Slavs had remained in the Pripet Marshes, if the Angles had been content to continue in 'happy Sleswick', if Attila had been of a more quietist temperament and if the Vandals had not sought the Mediterranean sun in Northern Africa. All this was followed by other awkward events, such as the expansions of the Teutons eastwards, the inrush of the Mongols, the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the war of 1914 which had seemed at the time so desirable to Conrad von Hoetzendorf and other able Austrian generals. But these things did happen and they left Central Europe a mass of sadly intermingled races speaking different languages, and all concerned about what was due to them. Failing federation there were three possible measures to be taken, extermination of those who were at the time most defenceless, another *Völkerwanderung*, or an attempt to safeguard minority rights. Although we have recently seen experiments by the Germans in the first two methods, in 1919 the third was the only possible policy, and so it was adopted. As we have already seen, it was feebly carried out. But this part of the Treaty settlement was one of its great virtues.

Frontiers present a whole series of problems. There are geographical, strategic and economic aspects, and these were by no means neglected by the peacemakers, although they have

often been accused of such neglect. But even in respect of self-determination, frontiers are not easy. Nationality, we know, is not easy to diagnose in all cases. It is a matter of family antecedents, sometimes of race in the sense of obvious physical characteristics, sometimes religion is the determining factor, sometimes an arbitrary sentiment when a man with many strains in him chooses to base himself on one. But the most generally useful is that of language, or 'mother-tongue', to use a phrase much favoured by Continental jurists. People who speak the same language have a facility for association, not always peaceful association, of course, but they can communicate with each other, and in places where there are racial and linguistic disputes a common language will oftener than not be a bond of unity. In so far as by drawing a frontier in a certain way you can keep people speaking the same language together and separate them from others, you have enormously simplified the business of government. Post offices, telephones, signposts, law courts, all these are much easier when, as in this country, we all speak the same tongue. Above all, it simplifies the problem of education, which in these days when there is a universal need of literacy is of the maximum importance.

It is in this and other ways that frontiers matter so very much, nor is any evasion of the problem possible even if the extreme pretensions of national sovereignty are abandoned. In this matter of frontiers Anglo-Saxons are prone to indulge in much silly and self-righteous talk. They wonder why Europeans are so excited about them, as though Americans never fought their way to the Rio Grande or Englishmen never allowed themselves to come near to civil war in 1914 over the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone. Education problems bring these matters home to us ; Englishmen should remember this, since without a language problem they have manufactured the problem for themselves in terms of sectarian education. The older school of politicians, Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Hugh Cecil, for instance, could remind us of the question of who should provide the school in a single school district, should it be church or board school ? In Wales the trouble exists now, for in some places Englishmen resident in Wales find that their children are taught Welsh, which they do not need, and even for some hours taught in Welsh, which they do not know. I have met a member of such an oppressed minority, a postal official, who complained that as a result his children could never

be top of a class or win a prize. In such cases it matters very much which side of a frontier you are on. Mr. E. H. Carr has suggested that in peace-making nowadays frontier-making is losing its importance.<sup>1</sup> This is an error. It is also an error to suppose that nationality is merely a nineteenth-century conception.<sup>2</sup> It is true that general education, greater mobility of labour and improved transport made it more generally important then than before, just as still greater improvements in transport now compel us to seek a solution of national difficulties but not to ignore them. A hundred and fifty years ago the Czech or Croat peasant was not so acutely conscious of his nationhood, because except for military service he did not need to travel and probably could not read. His overlord, rusticating on his estates, needed to know no more of the *Volksprache* than 'Where are you going, my pretty maid?' or 'No, no. The other gun, you blockhead.' But when peasants, President Masaryk, for instance, were going to Universities and taking good degrees and seeking professional employment, then these linguistic matters bulked larger.

But the problem of nationality was also of great concern to William Wallace and Robert Bruce, to Bertrand Duguesclin and Joan of Arc. It was not to nineteenth-century fantasies that they devoted their arduous lives. Be it noted, too, that they did solve their problems. Mr. Carr, a member of the would-be but defeated English Herrenvolk, may regret that standard English is not spoken in Dumfries and Caen, but it is not. The siege of Orleans was raised by the French; but the siege of Stirling was not raised by the English. But not only were Wallace and Joan of Arc in advance of their time; to-day, in the enlightened twentieth century, there are some so besotted with antique pedantry as to pursue these out-moded nineteenth-century conceptions, such as King Haakon retreating under fire across the Norwegian mountains, King Peter leaving the ruins of Belgrade for exile, Breton fishermen stealing over to Cornwall, Dutch airmen borrowing planes to join their army in England, Poles travelling half round the world to reach their fellow-countrymen in Scottish training camps. It has yet to be proved whether Quisling or those who make bold to call him traitor are indeed the heirs of the ages. To say that the states-

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Carr, *Conditions of Peace*, p. 241. 'The tradition which makes the drawing of frontiers the primary and most spectacular part of peace-making has outlived its validity.'

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 53.

men at Paris were obsessed by nationality is absurd, unless you are willing to say that a surveyor is obsessed by topography or a ship's officer by navigation. Nationality was with them day or night as, in a different way, it is with Hitler at this moment. If President Wilson had thought to banish it from his mind and devote himself to economics, he would soon have been brought round by M. Paderewski's visiting card or an urgent telephone call from Dr. Masaryk. He did once try to speak to the Italian people on the dangers of taking nationality too seriously. That is not remembered as one of his successes.

The general criticism of the frontier-making at Paris is that where there was a doubtful and difficult case the decision was apt to go in favour of one of the Allied powers. Yet when it was all over each of the smaller states, Poland, Rumania, Jugoslavia, was not satisfied, and on one occasion Clemenceau had to shout them into silence. The accusation that merely linguistic and ethnographic considerations won the day is answered by the other criticism, no less frequent, that great injustices were done to large populations. Czechoslovakia was given the ancient natural frontiers of Bohemia, the mountain chains of the Erzgebirge, the Riesengebirge and the Böhmerwald. The expression 'was given' is not quite accurate. We should say, 'was allowed to retain them', for they were the old frontiers between Austria and Germany and naturally fell under the dominion of Prague. It might have been possible to hold some plebiscites in the Sudeten land and awkwardly detach some counties for Germany. If this had been done it would have been hailed by many as an example of Wilsonian pedantry at its worst. In fact, the Germans of Bohemia at the time were not over anxious to share the fortunes of defeated Germany. We do not know even now how far their support of Henlein and Hitler in 1938 was the work of terrorism, and prudent calculation as to which was the winning side.

Another example was the Brenner frontier between Italy and Austria. Here strategic and prestige forces were at work. The southern Tyrol centred on Bolzano was German-speaking, just as the Trentino further south was Italian. It is said that the Brenner is not really the best military frontier, but a point much to the south where the mountains come close together. But it was an obvious piece of rounding off and the population was not large. We were not to know in 1919 that in three years the successors of Cavour would be replaced by a régime so bruta

as to forbid German inscriptions on tombstones. Transylvania was, and still is, an inextricable problem with Germans, Rumanians and Magyars intermingled. The majority is Rumanian, but not by a very great margin. The Rumanians took it without waiting for our approval and were allowed to keep it. In any case, as Lord Winterton had once pointed out, they were our allies. Perhaps if we have this question to settle once more we will be moved to favour either Hungary or Rumania on the basis that the one which rats first will get the prize.

The Polish-German and Hungaro-Czech frontiers were also baffling questions with strategic considerations looming large. Perhaps all strategic considerations were in error because of the rapid change in the technique of warfare. But we cannot say how the Czechs might have defended their mountain frontier, nor do we know how things might have been if the war had come ten years sooner. But no one then foresaw that Germany might be allowed to gain a terrifying superiority in arms and that she would be able to tackle the victorious allies on her frontier one by one. That this could come to pass was due not so much to what was in the Treaty but to what people chose to think about the Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A careful and well-balanced examination of the merits of the Peace Settlement has been given by Professor Gilbert Murray in *The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War*, edited by Leonard Woolf (published in 1933). See also Jessop, *The Treaty of Versailles : Was it Just?* (1942).

## Chapter Three

### THE RETREAT FROM VERSAILLES

#### I

It has often been suggested that in the years after the war German propaganda skilfully converted British public opinion to contempt and shame for the peace settlement that their statesmen had made. This is not true. It cannot be denied that in the course of time Germans did influence opinion in this country. But in the second half of the year 1919 there was not enough German writing on the subject reaching this country, nor was there enough intercourse between the two countries to account for the formidable and highly articulate volume of criticism that arose in Radical circles. The thesis that German opinion was so powerful a force is an example of that overestimation of propaganda which is too often made. It might seem dangerous at the present time to overestimate the power of such forces as a man like Goebbels can wield, but two things must be remembered. Goebbel's propaganda has had an edge given to it by Goering's Luftwaffe, and also there was not anywhere in the nineteen-twenties any organization so powerful or so rich as the present German propaganda ministry. We should notice in this connection a similar illusion nursed by many Americans who came to accept the view that their country's 'unfortunate' participation in the last war was due to diabolical English and French propaganda. Such opinion, of which there is a considerable literature, takes little account of the actual facts, such as the loss of American lives at sea, the violation of rules of war, the sabotage countenanced by officials of the German and Austrian embassies and the clumsy Zimmerman Note stirring up Mexican hostility to the United States. Indeed, the American view about us and the English view about German propaganda, is absurdly flattering to the country practising such arts of persuasion, and shows a truly astonishing lack of self-respect in those who admit themselves to have been thus deceived. Folly, ignorance and gullibility no doubt were there in plenty, but not enough. The seed must have been able to fall on fertile ground, and such wide changes in popular sentiment must have an inner cause in our own mentality.

German ideas on the wickedness of the peace did undoubtedly begin to tell, mainly, so far as I can judge, through Englishmen going to live in Germany to study the language and for other purposes.<sup>1</sup> Living in a German home, liking, for between wars the Germans seem likeable, the kindly cultured people who are his hosts, striking up a warm friendship with the fair-haired son and perhaps something more than a friendship with the sister, going for excursions and picnics in enchanted valleys, attending 'abends' where the refreshment is pleasant and the company festive, the young Englishman is in a receptive condition. Mr. Gilbert Frankau has described this for us :

Thus they twain dance the livelong afternoon.

Now *Schinkenbrod* appears, and scrambled eggs ;  
*Rollmops* is here, and *Hackfleisch, Speck* and *Huhn*,

To fortify each weary dancer's legs.

Soon shall the violin be dumb and soon

Empty the vastest of the landlord's kegs.

Hark 'tis the sacred toast, the final rite !

'*Prosit ! es lebe die Gemülichkeit.*'

In this atmosphere if the talk passes to world affairs, it is not easy to be stern or pedantic if your hosts make mention of the 'Carthaginian Peace'. What can you say, even if in this happy society you should desire to contradict ? That it served them right ? Perhaps it did, but after all they have taken a licking, poor fellows, and sportsmanship forbids you to rub it in. Naturally they feel sore. And in any case it's all over now. If you are politically minded you may enter into serious discussion, but your German friend knows, and cares so much more than you do. Also he speaks English so well and German so much better. He is adept in estimating cultural levels and you are in no position to argue in favour of the Poles and Czechs. Some points perhaps you feel bound to hold on to, but others you must concede, for if you do not concede something it will go on for ever. The Polish Corridor, can you defend that ? Thankfully you grasp this sop for Cerberus. 'Nein', you exclaim, breaking boldly and briefly for a moment into the language you are paying to learn. 'Nein, das ist zu viel.' Harmony is restored.

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted here that the fact that French is or was the first European language taught in schools and German a poor second had important effects. The University student, requiring German for his studies, went to Germany. French he could usually read, even if he could not speak it. According to the Norwood Report on Secondary Education the ratio of pupils offering French as opposed to German in the School Certificate was 93:13.

You have proved yourself magnanimous, he has gained an important point, only the first, but it is a beginning. After this he requires no Ribbentrop to tell him that the English will never fight for the Polish Corridor. When at 11.00 English summer-time on the third of September 1939 they proceed to do so, it is not surprising that the German feels deceived.

All this took time, but the cry against the Treaty rose before it was signed, and it swelled steadily. At first it was a party matter. The Coalition Government had made the Treaty and its members and supporters were bound to uphold it. This meant that all the Conservative Party and a good part of the Liberal Party were briefed in the case. But the Independent Liberals and the Labour Party were in full cry before the year was out. The election of 1918 intensified their hostility.

The Labour Party was in a position to influence the organized working classes and it had a formidable tail of able intellectuals to instruct it, and agencies, such as the Workers' Educational Association, to help in spreading the light. In this matter, as in many others, Labour policy showed a certain duality: there was the practical and immediate point of view and the theoretical and ultimate, reform *de facto* and socialism *de jure*. According to the high theory of socialism the actual details of the Treaty did not matter. There was nothing surprising in it. Thus did imperialist capitalist powers behave after they had won a military victory. There was avarice, cruelty and hypocrisy displayed in it. This was in the nature of things; the slums of Glasgow, the groaning servitude of the miners, the oppressed people of India were evidences of the same evil principle at work. These things would not last, for democracy was on the march, not the old *bourgeois* democracy, but the new social democracy. It could not fail; its destiny was written in the skies for the soldiers of humanity to read, as surely as the army of Constantine saw in the heavens the mystic apparition of the Cross. This new *labarum* was illuminated by an economic text, for were we not in the twentieth century? 'The organization of the means of production, distribution and exchange in the hands of the workers, *in hoc signo vinces*.' This was the core and substance of politics. The exact terms of the Treaty mattered little; indeed, it mattered little who had won the war, for the processes of history are not stayed by the mere incidents of history. It was purely a matter of technique to decide where and when the good work of revolution was to

begin and there was some uncertainty as to whether it was to be the opportunity of the defeated German workers or the duty of the victorious English workers. If it was suggested that a German victory would have made it more difficult for any revolution to take place at all, it could be argued that Germany's defeat was inevitable since it was a harsher, crueler and therefore a weaker form of capitalism. But those who were thinking in these terms were on a higher plane than the defenders or amenders of treaties, though they might make use of 'the infamy of Versailles' as an occasional stick to beat a passing dog. But true peace, social peace, the thing that endureth, that was written elsewhere than on diplomatic parchments.<sup>1</sup>

But that part of the Labour Party which was concerned with practical issues had some quite clear and sensible ideas about peacemaking. From the end of hostilities they had a feeling of community with the German worker, which was a stronger bond than most other classes in this country had. Germany had a powerful trade union movement which before the war had had close associations with the English movement. These men were now very powerful in Germany. One of them, Ebert, became President of the Republic, and the State Government of Prussia passed under their control.

To the question whether Germany had really turned over a new leaf and become 'democratic' they must answer, Yes. Her rulers were to no small extent recruited from the Social Democratic Party and the trade union movement, men of sense, men of moderation and men of peace. Others might prate about leopards that did not change their spots, but the English trades unionist looking at Germany and then at his own country and at America and France could not fail to make comparisons in Germany's favour. It is true that while Ebert, the cobbler of Heidelberg, ruled Germany, Lloyd George, the nephew and ward of the cobbler of Criccieth, ruled England, but he was now perverted and corrupt; he hobnobbed with Tories, lived by their votes in Parliament and promoted their measures. British

<sup>1</sup> This may seem to be a somewhat impudent parody of the socialist position or a deliberate choice of its most extreme form. But while I was an undergraduate I heard Mr. G. D. H. Cole address the Oxford University Labour Club. He told us earnestly, and I suppose, sincerely, that he looked forward to a time when we could turn aside from all these political and social problems and devote ourselves to art and music and so on. His speech, which was extremely impressive, dealt with the problem of redistributing wealth and achieving social justice. It quite clearly envisaged the end of politics in any sense in which we could imagine them. I cannot say that I was convinced, but it made me very thoughtful.

Labour leaders were not then to know that President Ebert, receiving the great Field Marshal Hindenburg, would forget his dignity as head of a sovereign state and rise to his feet. They might perhaps have paid more attention to public facts, such as the refusal of the German people, consulted by plebiscite, to reduce the princely fortunes of the Kaiser and other German ex-royalties. They might have observed that von Mackensen lived well on the pension of a Field Marshal of the Reich, while Foch, Marshal of France, in retirement had £400 a year, while Clemenceau spent his last days sparingly and little regarded in a small Paris flat. But there were easier objects of envy and vituperation at home, and when it came to denouncing the idle rich, London provided targets enough.

It should be remembered, too, that in 1920 the new forces in German government justified themselves by the success with which they defeated the Kapp putsch, a dangerous attempt by the reactionaries and militarists to seize power. Hitler's attempt at Munich in 1923 was also defeated without much effort. All this seemed to encourage the view that the German people did not welcome a violent nationalist policy. The great Socialist remedy against war, the general strike, did seem to be effective in 1920. It was the first and the last time. This too easy defeat of reaction was in many ways a disaster. The plot indeed had some effect in rousing people in this country to ask whether we could not make life more tolerable for Germany, and even Conservative Members of Parliament pointed the moral. But it had all seemed too easy, and we most of us tended to fall back to the comfortable belief that the good German workmen would always spare themselves and us the troubles of another war. The general strike became a kind of Maginot line, and as with the Maginot line there was a period during which it might have sufficed. But that time passed.

In classifying critics of the Treaty the moderate Labour elements in this country are not clearly distinguishable from the general radical and liberal movement. This movement was organized politically in two parties, Liberal and Labour, but so far as foreign politics were concerned they had no serious differences. This huge body of political opinion, which polled more votes than the Conservatives at every election from 1922 to 1929 inclusive, had at its disposal most of the able intellectual leaders and writers. Both harboured pure pacifist elements, the Labour Party more than the Liberal. Both had the same

mentality on methods of maintaining peace, the same belief in the League of Nations, the same reluctance to think in military and strategic terms, the same feelings of shame and distaste at the memory and about the instruments of war. They could never unite, because many Liberals were conservative in economic matters, and even the more radical refused to be bound by Socialist doctrine. As the weaker party the Liberals, or many of them, would have welcomed an electoral pact, mainly in the hope of obtaining a sane foreign policy, and they remember Mr. Henderson's tenure of the Foreign Office as a brief golden age. The Labour Party could not bring themselves to make such a pact. It would have cost them the allegiance of their extreme left wing, and nourished Communism. In any case they believed themselves to be the heirs of the future, their cause, the cause of social democracy, was sealed in victory for ever, more and more State, or perhaps trades-union-corporative control and more and more personal liberty, expanding equally like the square on the hypotenuse with the sum of the squares on the other two sides. Time was on their side, and in their discussions with their Liberal friends an impatient why-cumber-ye-the-earth note was often to be observed. But in their attitude towards the Peace Settlement they were all well agreed ; ' Versailles ' was a term of abuse.

We have already noticed some of the reasons which predisposed the Radicals to be hostile to the Treaty, such as their grievances over the election of 1918 and the fact that the settlement was made by their political enemies. But it would be both shallow and unjust to make this their only or even their main motive. Hostility to the Treaty was a complex matter ranging from well-grounded objections to particular items through a distrust of some of its general principles to a feeling that may be described at its best as spiritual and at its worst as pathological. The corresponding nouns would be English ethical sense or Anglo-Saxon masochism. In a broad view it is both. The British and American peoples are severe judges of other nations, but also of themselves. They have a keen conscience about their national policies and do not like to think themselves in the wrong even when they are powerful. When a large part of the nation was carried away by imperialistic enthusiasm, as in Britain during the Boer War and in America during the Spanish War of 1898, criticism and doubt were still expressed. Campbell-Bannerman denounced our concentration

camps in South Africa as 'methods of barbarism', but suffered nothing worse than some abusive letters and speeches. Five years later he had become Prime Minister and was able to carry out his own policy of conciliation. In America the anti-imperialist Bryan was able in 1908 to poll a formidable vote against President Taft, and that same President Taft, as Governor of the Philippines, had exhorted the occupying American forces to think of the people of the conquered islands as their brothers. In fact, it may be said that imperialism in the old swashbuckling sense of the term died out in both countries after and partly as a result of the victories. Now this is very remarkable. It may be attributed to an almost super-human prudence and restraint, an understanding that only a most moderate and restrained attitude to weaker nations would avert the general envy and hatred of the world. But this attributes too much to mere prudence. The powerful emotions of victory and imperialism required something more potent to exorcise them. This was supplied by a contrary emotion of anti-imperialism, which had many of the characteristics of religious feeling. If we ask why Britain and America are so prone to these emotions we are raising a deep historical question. I have in the previous chapter suggested that such sentiments on political matters are in some sense a luxury and could be safely indulged because of our immunity from conquest. But that does not prevent them from being ethical. Charity by the rich is still charity; Lord Shaftesbury did not cease to be virtuous because he was an earl. The moral sentiments which we are so apt to apply to public affairs arise out of something in our own moral nature.

For myself I would answer that this is a product of Protestant ethics as they have evolved in our countries, broader and more liberal than in Germany, more pervading and more truly Christian than the public ethics of Catholic countries. This great moral movement reached its height in the nineteenth century, which, as Mr. Ensor has so rightly stated, was one of the most religious epochs in English history.<sup>1</sup> It permeated our whole society and governed our morals even when the impulse of faith was growing weaker. All the people who in the first years of peace spoke with weight against the Peace Treaty were

<sup>1</sup> R. C. K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914*, p. 137 'Among highly civilized, in contradiction to more primitive, countries it was one of the most religious the world has ever known'

born under Queen Victoria. They had what silly undergraduates insist on calling the nonconformist conscience, a phrase by which inconvenient elements in the general teaching of Christianity are made to appear narrow and drab. Many people, therefore, before they came to a rational criticism of the Treaty asked themselves first, in what spirit has it been made, and the answer was that it was wrought in anger. It was an instrument of revenge, and for that reason it was wrong. In so far as this criticism was applied to the chief makers of the Treaty it was untrue. Wilson was not seeking revenge, he had ruled it out from the first. Lloyd George was in favour of the maximum possible relaxation. Even Clemenceau, the Tiger, was a moderate, and had a hard tussle with French military men like Foch. Englishmen too frequently forgot that Clemenceau was not a conservative reactionary but a great Radical, a fearless defender of the unhappy Dreyfus and the terror of the Right in French politics. Many of the best informed Radicals in this country recognized these facts, but that did not stop them in their emotional course. They could talk of creating Frankenstein monsters, of calling up evil spirits that could not be laid, of *hubris* and *nemesis* and the rest of the demonology of the sins of pride and anger. Fundamentally, a great many of these people were ashamed of being the victors, and this is where what I call the masochistic element comes in. The emotional atmosphere of victory was distasteful to them. The shouting, the mafficking, the appeals for vengeance, the gleeful observation of the fallen enemy's discomfiture, all this was odious to liberal-minded men of all parties. But psychologically a division arose. To some the vulgarities of the election campaign were painful but did not alter other facts, such as the invasion of Belgium or the sinking of the *Lusitania*. They might conscientiously hold that victory implied duties and not merely exultation and profit. But that did not mean that defeat conferred rights. Less imaginative in some ways than the radical enemies of the Treaty, they employed their imagination more in asking what Germany would have done if she had been victorious. The treaties of Brest Litovsk and Bukarest, imposed on Russia and Rumania, were often cited as terrible examples, pale shadows as they are of what victorious Germany now attempts. To all this the radical school replied that such comparisons were useless ; we did not go to war to sink to our enemy's level, our hands must be clean. This was good ethics

and perhaps sound policy, but those who spoke in this way usually did not face clearly enough the terrible dilemma between having clean hands and having strong hands, which is the eternal problem of politics and to which there is never at any time a perfect solution. But unless a critic keeps this dilemma before him he is likely to fall into the error of putting a presumption in favour of the defeated enemy. If the enemy is destroyed as the Southern States were after the American Civil War, this may be wise. But if he is only subdued and disarmed it is not so easy to know where wisdom lies.

Another question may be asked about the leaders of the radical assault on the peace. What sort of people were they? With few exceptions they were not working men, trades unionists and such like, although as we have seen this element in politics was in the same camp. But the speakers, writers, journalists, lecturers and preachers on the subject were mostly from the middle and upper middle classes. The majority of the members of such classes were and are Conservatives, as we know from the election figures in University or suburban constituencies. Those who are Radical must be in some sense special and peculiar. They fall into two categories. Their radicalism must be either inherited or acquired. If it is inherited, then they must have been subject to influences common perhaps but not general in their society. A nonconformist upbringing is one of the most ordinary explanations, but there were always a fair number of Liberal Anglicans. The Nonconformists, especially if they were Congregationalists or Quakers, were on the whole more intense in their radicalism. But all middle-class Liberals had this in common, that they were accustomed all their lives to be in a minority wherever they were, except possibly in Wales, certainly in Scotland and Yorkshire, much more so in the South of England. Now it is always difficult to be continually in a minority. It puts one under a strain. Those who are in disagreement with what they hear in the ordinary course of their day, in their club, at their place of business, on any social occasion, must either listen in silence to political views which they detest and so seem to assent to, or they must speak out and begin an argument. They acquire a defensive-offensive mentality according to temperament or circumstances. This is evident in national or religious minorities. Scotsmen, Welshmen, Jews, Catholics in England usually display some of these symptoms. Those English people who have lived in the United

States during this war have had an opportunity of acquiring this mentality, a feeling of always being on their guard.

It can easily be seen how this would affect the attitude of Liberals towards the Peace. While the majority of their Conservative colleagues and friends were taking it calmly enough they could not. In 1919 or 1920 the Liberals had either to assert themselves on the matter, and with each argument probably sharpen their views, or else they suffered in silence, in which case their mind festered a little more on the subject. It was not easy to be balanced in the matter. Even the most normal and equitable person must be affected to some extent by this minority situation.

Those whose radicalism was acquired were in an even more difficult situation. Those who in their adolescence or early manhood revolt against the political views of their families and become rebels to their own section of society are not only members of a minority but they are Ishmaels in their own homes. They have to face the disapproval of their fathers, uncles and elder brothers. Their assertiveness is likely to be even sharper than that of the 'inherited' Radicals. And there is the further question to ask, namely, why do people rebel against the political views which they find ruling in their usual environment? This is a complex and infinitely variable phenomenon. First of all allowance must be made for sheer 'intellectual interest and study. A boy or young man who develops political interests is likely to find that the books available on the subject and the preceptors whom he can hear are on the Radical side. The literature of radicalism in this country at least (it was not quite the same in France) has usually been the most striking and gifted. Those who defend existing conditions are less given to writing about them, and in the nature of things their writing is less exciting except when they take the offensive against the reformers. In the matter of the Peace Settlement this preponderance of Radical literature was particularly marked both in quantity and quality. We have already noticed how the history of the election was written by Radical writers and how great was the effect of Mr. Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Those who set out to acquire a critical knowledge of the Peace found a very strong leaven of criticism in the sources from which they acquired their knowledge.

But there are also psychological causes which predispose

young men to assert themselves against the conventional views in their own circle. There is probably no period of history in which this force is not in operation. But there is some reason to think that it was peculiarly powerful in the years after the last war. Various explanations may be given, the chief of which was the unsettling effect of the war which made the young feel disillusioned. Exactly what they were disillusioned about I have never quite been able to understand. If Germany had won a victory equal to ours in magnitude and completeness, it would be a probable speculation that her young men would not have suffered from disillusionment. In the classes which could genuinely call themselves proletarian there was certainly strong ground of complaint. Political leaders, and notably Mr. Lloyd George, had been over-eloquent in promising homes fit for heroes to live in, and when the post-war boom died down and trade was discouraged by a deflationary banking policy and by grave strikes and lock-outs, life was hard and precarious enough to cause bitterness. Yet even for these classes there were signs of improvement. While the absurd cry that war settles nothing, is equally disastrous for victors and vanquished, reducing both sides to an equal level of immorality and economic ruin, was rising louder and louder until it was accepted as self-evident, the nation was recovering its economic power and soon was wealthier as a whole than ever before. In trustee banks, in building societies and in savings certificates the wealth of the many was rising. Parliament was sensitive as never before to the demands of the labouring poor, whose representatives were in the House of Commons in force to voice complaints in the authentic accents of their own class and district. Social manners were becoming more equal and employers of factory and domestic labour were using a less arrogant demeanour to those whose labour they hired. By 1925 the labourers of England were on the whole richer and more free than in 1913. More of the national income passed through their hands or was expended by public authority for their use, and they were able more effectively to resist by their votes or by the power of their unions the caprice of the wealthy.

But we are not concerned so much with the proletariat as with the middle classes. Why should their sons have suffered disillusionment? Many indeed had cause to be embittered by their prospects in the post-war years. It must always be remembered that economic depressions do not hit only the

weekly wage earners. Business men go bankrupt sometimes ; they do not always make profits. Shareholders lose their savings as well as receive dividends. The collapse of prosperity in the cotton trade and the depression in the heavy industries brought many of the middle classes to reduced circumstances. There was much reason for disillusion here. Yet the disillusionment was widely spread amongst people who had no peculiar disappointment to complain of, amongst the professional classes and the sons of the well-to-do. The fixed income classes who profited from the steady fall in prices from 1921 onwards had their share of the common disillusionment. A cynical view is that these young people realized that in the post-war world things were not to be so easy for people of their own class. As compared with the golden year 1913 their fathers' incomes purchased less and were further reduced by heavy taxation and rising local rates. Employment was more difficult to secure, although the losses in the war and in the influenza epidemic of 1918 must have left many a dead man's shoe for the young to step into. There were fewer fathers and elder brothers in the way. On the other hand, the world was more unsettled than it had been. There were fewer personal businesses to succeed to, for the organization of trade and industry in great units made employment more anonymous and more competitive. An improved and more open educational system was raising dangerous competitors from slightly lower social strata to an extent which seemed to cancel out the advantages accruing to the individual from the fall in the birth rate. Opportunities for emigration to the Dominions and America were sadly reduced, and even the Indian Civil Service was thrown open to Indians. If then the world was not going to treat you as well as you expected, you were discontented and so placed yourself at the feet of all those numerous fervid and able persons who made a profession or a crusade of criticizing society as it stood. Another explanation of the disillusionment of the young is a surfeit of ethical ideas which resulted from the preaching of the survivors of the great evangelical period of the nineteenth century. To do justice to the nineteenth century and to many of the more recent preachers, it should be noted that in the nineteen-twenties the ethical ideas were often divorced from theology and strict personal codes of behaviour. To call out woe upon an evil generation is well enough if you count yourself as one of the generation thus denounced. If, however, you think of

it as an older generation or your own generation minus yourself then the exercise is not so healthy. The basic Christian doctrine of original sin is the necessary corrective to an overdose of ethics, as all good theologians know. But such doctrines were then unpopular and derided. Ethics therefore tended to become a centrifugal and not a centripetal force, applied outwardly but not inwardly, an indulgence and not a discipline. Great ideals were in the air, high standards on the moral and material plane were advocated. They were not attained, and therefore there was disillusionment.

It may be said that the only answer to this is to teach people that they must not expect too much, to remind them of Gladstone's remark that men ought not to suffer from disenchantment, that they ought to know that in politics ideals are never realized. This is indeed the only answer, and there were those who gave it. Amongst intellectual leaders Dean Inge, in his famous *Outspoken Essays*, did set himself to the task of warning his countrymen that there was little prospect of the twentieth century moving in smooth waters, but his counsels were unacceptable to Radicals and often too harsh to please Conservatives. But the promises which we made to ourselves and each other to keep up our determination to endure the war were not only illusory about the future, there crept in also a falsification of the past. The picture of the good new times was balanced by a picture of the bad old times, the days before the war. War made a gap in political memory, so that any wild or prejudiced statement about pre-war days would pass with the younger students of politics. Thus the illusion of the fresh start prevailed and calculations of relative improvement were unfashionable and appeared to be mean excuses. The brilliant pre-war Liberal Government was given almost no credit for its work. The old parties had just been solemn frauds attempting nothing. A new day had now dawned and all things were possible. Young enthusiasts were filled with vague aspirations, and to satisfy them plunged into Socialism. In this mood they were unlikely to make themselves well-informed, still less well-balanced, critics of the Treaty. A few sneers about the folly of hanging the Kaiser and making Germany pay were sufficient.

The type of young political student whom we are now discussing was a rebel from his normal environment, and in almost each individual case there must have been some emotional reason for his change. This is what Monsignor Ronald

Knox, in his witty historical study, *Let Dons Delight*, has called the apostatic type, the kind of man whose attitude can only be explained by a 'reaction' against his upbringing. Now the more normal, average man does not usually react against his traditions and upbringing. The natural thing to do is to accept them, to conform to his environment. Who therefore is the one who reacts? It is probably safe to say in most cases that he has some sense of inferiority which has to be balanced by some superiority, real or imagined. Sometimes the superiority may be a superiority of intellect, the inferiority may be anything from lack of stature, good looks, physical courage, athletic or mechanical skill, ease of manner, or means appropriate to his social circle. There is one way in which a young man can counteract such feelings, and that is to show that he is more intelligent, better-informed and animated by higher ideals and more generous views. Probably such a man is more intelligent than his orthodox fellows, and he is by his temperament more capable of substituting rationalized ideals for mere prejudice and class-interest. But in so far as he is employing these qualities as a means of compensating himself for deficiencies, then there is something false and unstable in his attitude.

I have dwelt at length on what I consider to be the different elements of the radical forces who set themselves up at once as enemies of the Treaty, because while quite enough has been said about the psychological condition of those who advocated a hard and punitive peace during the election or later, not enough has been said about the psychological condition of their opponents. But we must all have some psychological condition. A man who claims that he is always perfectly rational, calm, deliberate, incapable of prejudice and wrong judgement is a fool and will be believed by no one. Again and again when discussing the problem of the peace-making, people have said to me, 'We were unbalanced then.' I do not doubt it, but if the converse is urged, that we are balanced now, that is most improbable. I cannot see why men should ever expect to be balanced. It is not in human nature. It may be claimed that people in general were freer from violent anti-German feeling in 1926 than in 1919. But other emotions were inspiring them. Perhaps they had become 'unbalanced' in their fear of Bolshevism, or their dislike of France. Perhaps they had become not wise and moderate but merely indifferent to the question of Germany. There is this to be said for the unbalanced

moment that it is at least intense. The agonies and the anxieties of the war may have narrowed a man's mind, but as with Johnson's man awaiting execution, they concentrated his mind wonderfully. Without going into the merits of the disputes raging over 'Vansittartism', there is this at least to be said for Lord Vansittart's writings, that they challenge us to ask whether we are quite sure that the apathy or optimism of 1930 was really a wiser frame of mind than the resentment and suspicion of 1919.

I come therefore to the conclusion that the radical critics of the Treaty were strongly predisposed to denounce it. This was not merely due to political convenience, although as the opposition of the day they were almost bound to take that line. It arose from their whole philosophy of politics, and from their traditions. They were the descendants of those Whigs who had obstinately made a hero of Napoleon, descendants of the Cobdenites who had opposed the Crimean War, of the pro-Boers of 1900. During the war, whether they were Liberal or Labour, they had been suspected by the average Englishman of weakness in its conduct and of sentimental regard for the enemy. Their leaders, such as Asquith and Haldane, Macdonald and Snowden, had been outrageously abused as pro-Germans. This was untrue. Snowden had been a pacifist, which is quite a different thing, and Haldane was a man who knew Germany well, admired much that was good and feared and understood what was evil. Lord Milner had been much more German in his education and more German in his mentality, but as an eminent Conservative statesman he was immune from the persecution which bore upon Haldane. All this caused bitterness, and the Radicals naturally fulfilled their traditional role of pleading the enemy's cause once he had been rendered harmless.

It was in the nature of the Radicals that they set before them in peacemaking a high ethical standard which was never likely to be obtained. After all, they were not present in the conclaves of Paris. While the responsible statesmen in Paris made the Peace, the Radicals imagined it. The fruit of their imagination was sure to differ from the results of the hard tussle of interests and ideals which actually took place. As we have seen, the first official opposition criticisms in Parliament were moderate, and distinguished one issue from another. Asquith, when he fought a by-election in Paisley in February 1921, was still careful to avoid reckless condemnation, his high sense of

intellectual responsibility being one of his finest qualities. But in politics everything becomes reduced to very simple elements. We sneer at kindergarten histories which declare this king to be bad and that king to be good, but in political questions of our own time we are apt to apply the same naïve technique from the sheer weariness of making fine distinctions. It was not long before the Radicals were quite certain that, in terms of one-word answers, it was a 'bad' peace.<sup>1</sup>

If we examine the various issues on which they attacked the Peace, we shall find that it involved them in some confusion. First of all, there was self-determination, which the Peace accepted and consecrated rather than imposed. Radicals should have approved of this. Their gift of self-determination within the Empire to the Boer states in South Africa had been one of their greatest triumphs, and they believed with great earnestness that our failure to apply it in time to Ireland was the cause of the miserable guerrilla war then raging in that country. But the new states of Europe did not please them. They suffered from a certain moral stigma in being allies and victors. Splendid as their resurrection was to the older romantic type of Liberal, to men like G. K. Chesterton and Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, they were no longer objects of sympathy, and the application of sympathy was the *forte* of the Radicals. The proper objects of sympathy were the enemy states, starving Austria and shocked and shattered Germany, now apparently mending her ways under liberal institutions. For Hungary sympathy soon cooled when the Bolshevik government was overthrown by Admiral Horthy with the cruelties of a 'white terror'. Further east Gladstonian ideas still prevailed, and Bulgaria was pitied but not Turkey, as was shown by the sympathy displayed for Greece when the Turks successfully attacked her. Our allies, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, Rumania, were condemned. They had done too well out of the peace. Their frontiers were too wide. There was much truth in this, as we have remarked, but if a sense of proportion had been applied, it would have been seen that in many places there were good economic arguments

<sup>1</sup> In 1931 on Armistice Sunday a distinguished and much respected preacher, Miss Maude Royden, addressed a congregation in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford. It was an official occasion, the Vicc-Chancellor and Proctors attending. In her sermon she referred, to the Treaty of Versailles as a self-evident example of evil in public policy. At the end of the sermon we sang Blake's 'Jerusalem'. The suggestion that the Treaty was to be numbered amongst 'the dark Satanic' things was inescapable. No one seemed to think her remarks at all strange.

in favour of some of the ethnographical injustices. In any case, it was a very much fairer division of territory and authority than had existed in the old Austrian Empire, where two minorities of Herrenvolk, the Germans and the Magyars, ruled over the rest. Before 1914 no Radical would have favoured moving a single gun-boat or writing one diplomatic note to promote the destruction of Austria-Hungary. To preserve peace the worst possible *status quo* was worth keeping.

If this applied to the 'ramshackle Empire', then it should have applied to the new settlement without boggling about details. But the new states had two other vices. They were bad economic units and imposed tariffs on imported goods. They were also militaristic and maintained armaments. This was wrong. A small police force for internal order might have been forgivcn, but real armies with artillery and staff officers were extremely repellent to the radical mind. The Radicals were too sanguine in their hopes of disarmament ; the new states were surely entitled to the same period of grace in observing the behaviour of Germany that Britain and France were taking for themselves.

In other ways the succession states came to be distrusted. Their raw and insurgent nationalism was displeasing, suggestive more of Belfast on the twelfth of July than of a well-conducted place like England. The treatment of minorities was often unsatisfactory and, to do the Radicals justice, if they had had a long period of office they might well have done much to remedy this. Then there was the cultural level which was not too high and compared unfavourably with that of Germany. No grace was to be given to these harassed peoples to build up their culture. They were to be put at once into competition with the products of the highly wrought civilization of Germany. There was another feature about the succession states. They were to a great extent peasant states. To individualistic Liberals this was a merit on the whole, but this form of Liberalism was on the decline. Radicals on the whole disliked countrymen. Town-bred for the most part and working in business or professional life, many of them have something of that prejudice to which Arnold Bennett confessed when he said that rustics struck him as being like 'aged bus-conductors struck with lightning'. To the whole-hearted Socialist, peasants were the most sinister of all social phenomena. Small capitalists and workers on their own account are deadlier foes than large-scale

capitalists whose wealth is an object of envy, whose arrogance is manifest and whose factories can be taken over in a moment of time, or so at least it was thought. But the peasants are too numerous, too persistent and tenacious to be dealt with. They were poor, but poor in the wrong way, victims of no one but themselves. Even if they still had landlords from whom to be delivered, they only wanted the land for themselves and not for a larger society. They were so horribly indestructible ; a herd of elephants may be shot with guns ; you cannot shoot a swarm of locusts. When it was added that they were religious and Catholic and Greek Orthodox at that, the indictment was complete.

But the Socialists not only disliked these states because they were full of small peasants, but because the states themselves were small. Thinking in terms of large-scale production they were unsuitable units, even Czechoslovakia with her great factories and Rumania with her oil. Socialist revolution had little chance in any of them and, if it succeeded, there was not a large enough field. Glasgow, Hamburg, Marseilles, Milan were better focal points, and if they did what was hoped, they might overturn the social system of a great power. The Socialists were rather like American politicians who to win a Presidential election must carry the great states, Pennsylvania or New York, and who care little for Idaho or Rhode Island. The politicians of these new European states, when they looked to Britain, found that they were disliked for their armies, and when they asked where their security lay they were told, 'in the League of Nations'. When they asked who in England were the supporters of the League, they were told the Radical parties. Knowing as they did what so many radicals were saying about them, it is not surprising that the new states decided to keep their powder dry.

The disapproval of the Radicals for the economic parts of the Peace Treaty, as we have seen, was more of what had been promised at the election than of what the Treaty contained on the subject. Their policy on this matter was to press the British Government to reduce the claims of France. It was pressing at a door which was opening by its own momentum. This, however, did not deter many Radicals for blaming the Treaty for provisions which had been most carefully avoided in its making.

The colonial question presented difficulties to Radical opinion. Here the Treaty offered the half-loaf of the mandate system.

This was a Liberal expedient, and since it gave authority to the League of Nations was so far good. The mandated territories could not levy preferential duties nor be used for military bases. They were free from some of the taints of imperialism, and while Page-Croft and the high Tories raged against them, they had to be defended. But soon cynical references to the hypocrisy of taking colonies under the cloak of a mandate became frequent. This was true especially of mandated territories rich in economic wealth. At a Student Christian Movement Congress in Glasgow in 1920, Miss Maude Royden, addressing a crowded meeting of young people in St. Andrew's Hall, contrasted the relative treatment accorded to Armenia and Iraq. 'In Iraq there is oil; in Armenia there are only—Armenians.' The effect of this was to make us feel that our rulers were very wicked and that we were virtuous in observing them to be so. I would not deny that there was something in the taunt. The oil of Iraq was an important consideration. It could not be ignored. It might have been left to the Turks, but we were pledged to keep them out. Bolshevik Russia might have been allowed to extend southwards and occupy it. No one suggested leasing it to Germany. In due course the Iraq mandate was ended, leaving the new State as a British satellite with a minimum armed force to guard it. It proved in 1941 to be exactly a minimum. A few aircraft less and the German plot to hold Baghdad would have succeeded.

As the years passed, the Radical conscience on the colonial question grew more sensitive. The argument based on German cruelty to natives was dismissed as propaganda. The administration of Portuguese and Belgian colonies was held up as an example of mis-government that we were willing cynically to condone. Such arguments were indeed disturbing. Fundamentally there was only one answer. Portugal and Belgium had not deliberately chosen war rather than peace in 1914, but Germany had done so. They had not sought world-dominion by force. It might be wrong to permit them to hold great colonial territories, but it was not unsafe.

This brings us to the crux of the whole problem of the Treaty. The statesmen of the victorious powers who made it, and the peoples who gave them their mandate, had no doubt at all that Germany and Austria were responsible for the war. The whole Treaty was based on that assumption. It was the basis of the demand for reparations which covered more than the mere

destruction of property by warfare. It was not only assumed in the Treaty, but it was stated in the most solemn terms. This is to be found in Articles 227 to 230 of the Treaty. Article 227 reads as follows :

‘ The Allied and Associated Powers publicly arraign William II of Hohenzollern, formerly German Emperor, for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of Treaties.’

This should be read in conjunction with a passage in the preamble of the Treaty which recites that ‘ the war originated in the declaration of War by Austria-Hungary on July 28, 1914, against Serbia, the declaration of war by Germany against Russia on August, 1914, and against France on August 3, 1914, and in the invasion of Belgium.’ Article 231 also indicts Germany ; ‘ The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nations have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed on them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.’

Now these passages contain two charges. The first is that Germany by her aggression was responsible for the war, and the second is that she, and in particular her ruler, William of Hohenzollern, had violated treaties. With regard to the first assertion, it might perhaps be said that it was absurd and unfair to convict Germany of ‘ aggression ’. In 1914 there was no international instrument outlawing war. War was a policy that any State was free to adopt if it chose. In 1912 the Balkan states had committed aggression against Turkey, in 1911 Italy had made war on Turkey also. In 1899 the Transvaal Republic had declared war by ultimatum on Great Britain and had duly invaded her territories. If it was said that these countries had acted in self-defence, that was a matter of opinion, and Germans devoutly believed, at least by the end of the Great War, that they had so acted. If it be said that while there was no written agreement, there was a general belief, recognizing that war was a crime in the circumstances of the twentieth century, the Germans could reply that their leaders and writers had never agreed to such a principle. If the Liberal states had had such illusions then they had created them for themselves ; Germany’s views had been clear enough.

The second assertion raised much clearer issues. Germany

had violated a very solemn Treaty when she invaded Belgium. It could not possibly be said that this Treaty had been nullified by circumstances. Amongst the 'circumstances' which arose from the fact that it was held to be in force, were the unfortified French-Belgian frontier, and certain naval and military dispositions of Great Britain. If Belgium had kept an army and erected fortresses, it was her duty to defend her neutrality ; it was no one's duty to violate it. Then there were other international obligations laying down how war should be conducted once it had begun. Germany was a party to such agreements and was bound by them. Even if we give her the benefit of the doubt in every case alleged against the conduct of her army in Belgium and elsewhere, it is still true that she violated rules of war on the sea and in the air. The Germans sank ships without warning and in utter disregard of the safety of the crews and passengers. German airmen also dropped bombs on unfortified towns without any discrimination. These were clearly ascertainable facts of history. The bombing from the air served her purposes very little. After a long interval the Allied powers retaliated.<sup>1</sup> Her violation of the rules of warfare at sea was peculiarly deliberate. They were brought to her notice, not by the injured protests of an angry belligerent, but by the most remote and the most pacific power in the world, the United States of America, whose ruler, himself an eminent jurist, understood and stated such matters with extreme clarity. After each successive protest Germany had moderated her conduct till at the end of 1916 she resolved with the utmost deliberation to defy all such rules of war completely. By this breach of international law she nearly won the war. The Allies could hardly ignore such things when they came to make peace.

There were therefore two issues, war-guilt and guilt-in-war, but the actual crimes of the Germans in war soon became absorbed into the general horror and disgust at all the facts of war. With regard to Germany's guilt in making war, it was not attacked on grounds of juridical absurdity, but more generally the charges made by Radicals were as follows : it was not kind, it was not wise, it was not true to say such things.

That it was unkind to say such things can hardly be denied. If one of the conditions of making a good peace is that there are to be no hard words, then the Treaty certainly erred. It is

<sup>1</sup> First Zeppelin raid on England, April 1915. First retaliatory raid by our air force on Kaiserslautern, June 1916.

open to the criticism often made against wills, that the testator should have been content to cut off his expectant relatives but should not have lectured them. But this hard-headed view of the matter scarcely represents the attitude of the most sentimental type of Radical. Their feeling was rather that as Germany had suffered defeat this should be sufficient ; her feelings should be spared. There is a certain wisdom in this, although nothing could have abated the hard words used by people in the allied countries about Germany in the year after the war, and they would not easily have been forgotten even if they had not been put on parchment for her representatives to sign.

That it was unwise is a very reasonable thesis. In 1919 the previous four years were looked back on as an unprecedented horror in modern history. It was said to be 'a psychological blunder' to include in the Treaty a confession of Germany's guilt. However true it might be, no nation could be expected to confess to responsibility for so much evil and suffering. Just as a nation should not be bound by treaty to do anything that is not physically possible, so it should not be expected to accept anything that is not psychologically possible. I confess that I am much impressed by this argument. Germans were not likely to believe that their country was responsible for the war because their diplomats had been forced to sign a statement to that effect in a treaty which was in its nature odious to all Germans, if only as the symbol of defeat. It may be said that we should have left them to find their own war-guilt and attaint themselves. We know that only a very small number of Germans ever did so. That the Germans were not encouraged to take to themselves the responsibility for the war by the war-guilt clauses of the Treaty I can well believe. If it is contended that they would, to any significant extent, have done so if the Treaty had left the question alone, then I say that the burden of proof rests on those who make such a contention. We know that the Germans, or a large number of them, were actually able to maintain that they had not really suffered military defeat ; people who could believe this were well-equipped to believe that they were also innocent.

The Radicals, in considering the war-guilt clauses, might have asked how it came about that such 'ethical' considerations entered into the Treaty at all. If it had been a simple question of the right of the stronger, the spoils to the victor, no war-guilt

clauses need have been elaborated. Who had laid such stress on ethical considerations ? It cannot have been militarists, the chauvinists, the jingoes in the Allied lands. These are not things that they either know or need to know. It was the Liberals, the Socialists, the Internationalists. It is a plain political fact that the whole population of Britain was not willing to fight or to stretch itself in the war-effort, if the war had been merely an extension of national policy. They had to be convinced that they were fighting for supra-national principles. When it is said that people in this country did not really go to war because of the invasion of Belgium, the statement is true of some but not of others. While it is almost certainly true that the Government would have entered the war even if Belgium had not been invaded, it is equally true that there would not have been the same keen support for it. There were some citizens who remained unmoved by the poster of Kitchener demanding service for King and Country, but who joined up after the Zeppelin raids or the sinking of the *Lusitania*. The Trades Unions had to be assured again and again that it was a righteous war, a war against war itself. The Treaty that ended such a war would have been cynical indeed if it had shown no recognition of such high principles and such deep historical truths. The Radicals had called up spirits from the vasty deep and they had come when they were called upon. That these spirits remained too long upon the scene and acted too literally upon their instructions is not surprising.

The war-guilt question, however, resolved itself mainly into a problem of history. Was it really true that Germany or Austria had been responsible for the war ? This question has been debated endlessly. The one thing that might have saved us from the discussion would have been a swift German victory in the autumn of 1914. The German Government could hardly then have denied itself the satisfaction of claiming the credit of having made so successful a war, just as Bismarck left posterity in no doubt as to what had been his purposes. In Britain and America, however, there was endless debate amongst writers, teachers and politicians on the question of war-guilt. A large part of the country, especially amongst those who were adult in 1914, it must be admitted, scarcely bothered about the matter. They knew. They could remember the deep consternation in the City of London, the grave faces of all responsible citizens as the storm grew nearer. They understood that the

Liberal Government of the day was the most deeply pacific that the nation had known for two centuries. Many stout Tories who dread war, but who dreaded still more the conquest of all Europe by Germany, were terrified lest a poltroon like Asquith, a dullard like Grey, a pro-German like Haldane, a bad-blooded pacifist like Lloyd George, would shrink from their plain duty. They were ready for war if it came, but none of them doubted that it was for the German Emperor to bind or loose. Such people have never for a moment doubted Germany's responsibility and many are even ignorant of the extent to which their juniors have worried over the question.<sup>1</sup>

My own view is clear. Although I was only sixteen when the war broke out, in this matter I am with the older generation. While I recognize that academically one can argue the question in and about, going back as far as the coronation of Charlemagne in A.D. 800, I have no doubts. As an Oxford tutor I am trained to hear any arguments in favour of any thesis, however absurd I may think it, knowing well that there is nothing that loses one the confidence of the young so much as an appearance of dogmatism. But I know that if in July 1914 the Austrian Government had accepted the Serbian reply to their ultimatum, there would have been no war then. I know that even afterwards if Grey's proposal for a conference had been accepted by Germany or if the German Government had shown any desire to consider the question as an international problem with a will to its peaceful solution, the war would have been averted. I know that men like Asquith in England and Viviani in France do not make war if it can be avoided by anything but complete submission. I know that men like Tirpitz and Moltke in Germany and Conrad von Hoetzendorf in Austria want wars, like them and think about little else all their lives. If there were military men here and in France similar to these, which I doubt, I know that they had not the power to control the civilian Government. If in Germany civilians like von Bethmann-Hollweg were burning with zeal to stop the war, which I doubt, I know that they did not control the Government. Talk about

<sup>1</sup> I recently tried to enter on an explanation to some very senior colleagues of the various intellectual trends which made so many young men of the student class doubt the guilt of Germany. My seniors were so angry at the mere idea that I had to drop the subject at once. Indeed, they seemed to think that I myself was guilty of the heresy, and in so far as it is true that I was familiar with the arguments and had at times discussed them patiently, I suppose that in a sense my senior friends were justified in their indignation against me.

sinister Russian designs has no effect on me, for I know that without Britain and France Russia was helpless. Talk about capitalist wars is meaningless to me, for I have seen and met, as a boy and again in middle life, capitalists threatened with the dangers of war. For German and Japanese capitalists I will not answer ; they may have, or may think they have, little to lose and much to gain. If they welcome war it is because they are Germans and Japanese and not merely because they are capitalists.

I cannot therefore admit any other major thesis than that Germany and Austria were responsible for the war breaking out. There are secondary problems of British responsibility. Was our Government too pacific in its attitude ? Should we have armed more intensively say by adopting conscription or would this have provoked a war immediately ? Above all, should we not have been more precise in our commitments, made an alliance with France and left no doubt of our intentions ? These are baffling historical problems, but if I am faced with the statement that Britain had any positive responsibility for the war in the way that Germany had, then I feel that there is only a psychological problem, namely, to understand why Englishmen should desire to think so. Professor Brogan has remarked that to fail to understand Hitlerite Germany required not merely ignorance but will. The same, in my opinion, is true of those who think that Germany was not primarily responsible for war in 1914.

I realize that many readers having heard this confession, will not be able to follow any further observations I make on this subject, but I should be trifling if I did not make my position clear. If the Radicals object to being stretched out on the psycho-analyst's couch about this problem, they must reflect that when their theories were a little more popular than they are now, they did not hesitate to apply the same sort of treatment to those who disagreed with them. The Socialist view has already been noticed. It was that the war arose out of the inevitable conflict of competing capitalist states who being unable to solve their own problems of economic and social life were driven to war.<sup>1</sup> They may have done this consciously or

<sup>1</sup> An even simpler view that had some vogue was, that wars were made by armaments manufacturers. In an article in *Time and Tide* of 21st March 1942 Miss Rebecca West declared that wars were not made 'as we once supposed by armament profiteers'. I insist on believing that Miss West never herself supposed anything so foolish, but it is interesting that she should testify to the generality of such a notion.

unconsciously. There were different schools of thought on that subject. On the whole it was better to say that it was done unconsciously. This absolves you from having to pay any attention to anything that was ever said or written by capitalist leaders. It is always best to conduct an argument with your opponent's unconscious mind. Not only does it not answer back but it can even be made with due manipulation to provide the answers you want. Whether the Socialist thesis is true or not is a problem of the philosophy of history and must be referred to that court. I can only note the existence of the problem and state my own position.

A thoroughly Marxist-Socialist view of the origin of the war did not however gain wide currency in this country until about the end of the 'twenties. It remains to examine the position of those who were not doctrinaire on the subject, but who encouraged the idea that the war was a matter in which all the major parties were seriously to blame. I have already referred to the propensity of many people in this country to be willing to believe their country in the wrong, and have suggested that this arises partly from a high ethical standard in public matters and also from inner temperamental or psychological needs. Such persons have a laudable desire to be fair to our enemies, but this is very difficult to attain. Unless one is miraculously well-balanced one will either not be fair enough or too fair. When one reflects that the average Englishman in the period just after the war was abusive of Germany and of anyone who tried to appreciate her point of view, then it is clear that those who set out 'to see the other side' had no easy task. They were almost bound to overstate the case. They were sure to feel resentment and anger against the vulgar jingoes to whom they were opposed. It cannot have been easy to be calm. Possessing sensitive consciences themselves, they were willing to accept a conviction of national sin, and having at the same time a strong sense of their own political righteousness, they were able to preserve it by putting the charge at the door of their political enemies. If a man says, 'We were all hypocrites about the invasion of Belgium', he does not usually mean that he personally was a hypocrite, but that others less intelligent and virtuous than himself were hypocrites. But in so far as he as an Englishman cannot dissociate himself from the nation of which he is a member, so he is being generous also. If the people to whom he is saying it are angered by the remark, then

he is displaying moral courage. If he says it to a German, then he is being magnanimous and promoting international good feeling. When so rich a harvest of agreeable emotions is to be reaped by the simple process of declaring your country to be wrong, it would be strange indeed if many people, slightly deficient perhaps in other sources of personal satisfaction, did not make use of these opportunities. For the process of international understanding to be complete the German should reply to such a remark about Belgium, 'But no, you were entitled to be indignant ; it was indeed a terrible breach of faith.' How often such a reply was made, I do not know.

The Radicals therefore went over our foreign policy with the utmost care, picking out the doubtful elements. Our conversations with France on military problems begun in secret in 1906 were 'sinister'. The same word could be applied to the Schlieffen plan for the invasion of Belgium completed before 1906. In effectiveness the two measures cannot be compared, but the Radical critic felt bound to concern himself with the 'sinister' designs of his own country, or perhaps he contented himself with some remark about two wrongs not making a right, for even intellectuals do not despise such homely wisdom when it is convenient. One might think that many would have reflected that Campbell-Bannerman himself, the great Radical leader, the political heir of Gladstone, the bold apostle of conciliation with the Boers, had licensed the military conversations, and that therefore such measures must have been taken for the best of reasons. But many things could be said about Campbell-Bannerman : he was old, he was stupid, he was misled by Grey and the Liberal Imperialists, he was a former War Minister, a Scotsman, a Presbyterian, in general a person unacceptable to tender quakerish minds. Not that many people remembered much about Campbell-Bannerman or thought of him seriously. It was enough that we had had *military* conversations.

How many people in this country accepted the view that the war of 1914 arose in circumstances which left much to be said to our discredit and much to be said in condonation of German policy we shall never be able exactly to estimate. That it was widely held by men who were too young to serve in the last war, and especially by those who thought, talked and wrote about the subject, cannot, I think, be questioned. In considering the Treaty, however, the question is vital. If there was no

war-guilt, then the Treaty was a monument of hypocrisy. There was no basis at all for reparations other than some compensation to France and Belgium for the *accident* that the war was fought on their territory. Every provision of the Treaty that was 'harsh' to Germany was unjustified, for into the scale of justice not the lightest weight was to be thrown, if it represented any judgement on the origin of the war. If on the other hand war-guilt was admitted, then the main provisions of the Treaty fall into place, they have cause and reason, justice and vindication.

This brings us back to the eternal riddle of the German people which still confounds us and is more hotly argued than ever. One view was that the German people in November 1918 had made a new start and were to be given a new start. They were said to merit this because they had made a revolution and thrown out their despots. They had turned against militarism. If they had endured the war so long it must be remembered that they had not ruled themselves. The Reichstag was a pale reflection of the House of Commons or the French Chamber. The Reichstag did not appoint ministers; it could not throw out a government whose policy it did not like; only the Kaiser could do that. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the German people had not merely endured the war but fought it with incredible fortitude, skill and zeal. There had been occasions when peace overtures had been possible and on none of these occasions had the German terms suggested a settlement that would not have left them with more power and more territory than they had had before. Had the German people ever demanded peace on easy terms when their armies were victorious? How many of them had agonized over the fate of Belgium, over the civilians drowned at sea or killed in air-raids? The cry for peace, the reluctance to fight had followed defeat and not preceded it. Could we forget these things? Such are the broad outlines of the controversy, puzzling in respect both of the last war and of this.

## II

Conservative opinion, which I will refer to by the more positive and descriptive term, Tory, was not in the first year or so hostile to the Treaty. Individuals may have had their doubts about many parts of it. Some thought it had not gone far enough in punishing and weakening Germany. Criticism

of the Peace from the Radical side aroused strong resentment. This can be seen not only in the hostile reception given to men like Wedgwood or Kenworthy in the House but in the reviews of Mr. Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace* in Conservative journals. I have read many of these and the main charge against him was of his sympathy with the enemy, his harshness to Allied Powers like Poland and France. The word pro-Hun is even used. Yet in the end the book won its way forward even with the Tory public because, in spite of its superior air, it was on relatively firm ground in its analysis of the economic problem of reparations. The editor of *Punch*, Sir Owen Seaman, might write a satirical little poem declaring that :

‘some of the ultimate things  
Are hidden even from Fellows of King’s’

But the Fellow of King's seemed to know about the matter. After the first natural, and to some extent justifiable, disgust with the book passed off, men who had promised their constituents full reparation were compelled to consider the book. Not merely economists, who can be dismissed as academic, but bankers and business men who understood something about trade, and not merely the crude activity of production, began to speak well of it. Soon it became evident that the amounts we could hope to receive in reparation would be small and that instead of disputing amongst ourselves we should bring combined pressure to bear on the French Government to ask for less and avoid driving Germany to despair. So opinion slowly moved round. Even in 1923, when the French under Poincaré lost patience, declared German default and occupied the Ruhr, the Tories were divided. The Bonar Law Government refused to co-operate with the French, but refrained from an open break. Some papers like the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail* supported the French action, and people may still remember the *Mail's* slogan, ‘Hats off to France’. Yet this storm died down, and the Conservative Party set itself on a path of reasonable appeasement which culminated in the Treaty of Locarno in 1925. Quite early the Tories had abandoned the project of trying the Kaiser and they soon forgot about the lesser war criminals. The war cries with which they had overwhelmed their Liberal and Labour opponents in 1918 soon died away. The Radical critic would say that this was because they had

served their purpose and could not be used again with success. This, I think, is unfair. It suggests that the Tories had gone to the polls in 1918 excogitating slogans such as ' Make Germany pay ' or ' Hang the Kaiser ', because they calculated that thus would they bemuse the common people and win the election. But this belief in the folly and wickedness of the people is rather a tenet of the ' democratic ' parties. The Tories, at any rate in the days of their confidence and pride, felt that they and the nation were one. ' The people ' was a fictitious entity invoked by the Radicals to work their nefarious purposes. To this the Tories oppose *the nation*, all sensible Englishmen.<sup>1</sup> When the war was ended they did not need to think out any plan to win over the mass of ordinary people ; they knew that they were on the same side. I do not believe that a party has ever spoken more naturally and spontaneously than the Tories in 1918. Make Germany pay and hang the Kaiser were thoughts that arose naturally in their minds. They paid their fellow-countrymen the compliment of supposing that they shared these plain and sensible ideas. That the Radicals were prone to false sentiment the Tories were well aware, that the Socialists had been in their bonnet about international brotherhood everybody knew. But these absurd, factious and harmful forces were not for the moment dangerous. The breath of fresh air and good sense which the war had brought would sweep them away.

Yet the fact remained that the Kaiser had not been put on trial and Germany was not paying the cost of the war. Did not the Tories feel themselves to be in an absurd position? Must they not either bestir themselves to fulfil the letter of the Treaty and carry out their promises, or else recant their errors and admit themselves to have been foolish and wild in their election policy? To suppose this would be to show a strange misunderstanding of the Tory mentality. To accuse it of inconsistency is neither injury nor insult. The Tory in politics acts on the intuitive judgement. He faces things as they come to him, but he does not try to rationalize them. This is not because he cannot reason, but because he knows that reasoning will lead you too far and perhaps commit you to things which you feel to be against common sense. If you are angry then you may

<sup>1</sup> This can be traced back very far. In 1708 the Tory leader and philosopher, Bolingbroke, wrote to his chief Harley : ' Observe what a distinction there is between the true strength of this nation and the *fictitious* *force* of the Whigs.'

perform an angry act, if your anger was justified then the act will have its justification also. But nothing could be more foolish than to commit an act that was the consequence of anger when you are no longer angry. That is making a principle of the thing, it is doing something because you once thought it was what should be done. But if good sense tells you now that it is not right or necessary, then why defy good sense for the sake of a principle?

The working of this mentality is well illustrated by the question of the Kaiser. The demand for his trial was honoured; it was placed in the Treaty. William of Hohenzollern, however, was at Doorn in Holland, peacefully felling trees like another wicked man also called William. In due course the Allied and Associated Powers demanded his extradition. The Government of the Netherlands refused. A nation famous for its work in jurisprudence could recognize no principle of law compelling them to surrender their guest; a nation that had always welcomed political exiles honoured such traditions. Holland would only yield to force. Was it to be brought to bear upon them? While Radicals observed with delight how the 'vindictive and ridiculous' clauses of the Treaty were being brought into contempt by the high-minded courage of a small nation, the Tories shrugged their shoulders. After all, it was not worth the trouble of coercing Holland. If the Kaiser had been caught by our armies that would have been another matter, but to force the Dutch to surrender a man whom they felt, rightly or wrongly, they were entitled to protect seemed contrary to good feeling. It did not square with that British sentiment which a French writer has translated by the term '*le fairplay*'.

The payment of reparations was not a question on which there could be a clear-cut issue. The Tories, men like Claude Lowther and Page-Croft, had always looked on it as a business affair. They had demanded that we should present the bill. When it became evident as a matter of hard fact that the bill could not be met, then the only question that arose was to what extent the debtor could be allowed to compound. Our statesmen had this matter in hand on the Reparation Commission. It must be remembered that some reparations were paid and that the question was bound up with the American debt and international exchange generally. It was a complex, technical question and dragged on through the decade of the 'twenties with loans to Germany, payments by Germany, stand-still agreements and so

on, until only those keenly interested or professionally concerned could follow it all. Besides, no problem remains for ever in the centre of the stage. There were many other matters to think of. There was the war in Ireland and later the Irish Treaty. There was the problem of India, where the 'dubious' Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were being put into operation and where the Amritsar 'massacre' had aroused a Radical storm. Above all, there was the challenge of Socialism, the partial Socialist victory of 1923, and the awe-inspiring spectacle of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald kissing hands as Prime Minister. There was the famous Zinoviev Letter election of 1924 and the return of the Tories to power. In 1925 we returned to the gold standard, in 1926 there was the General Strike and a lock-out in the coal industry lasting from May to November. There were plenty of things to think of without brooding about the rights and wrongs of the Peace Treaty.

Yet the Treaty could not be altogether disregarded, for if the Tories were inclined to forget that they had been in office when it was made, the Radicals remembered this. As opinion generally became more hostile to the Treaty, as pacifists, convinced that war could never bring any good, demonstrated that the peace which followed a war could never bring good, the Tories became embarrassed by their connection with it. It may have been sound at the time to make Germany pay the cost of the war and to hang the Kaiser, but the projects had not succeeded. Whether right or wrong, they had failed, and the Tory conceives himself as a practical man who should not be responsible for failures. Fortunately there was an easy way of escape. The Government which made the Treaty was a coalition of some Liberals and all Tories, and its head, standing above all other members, was Lloyd George. Lloyd George had been shed by the Tories at the first convenient moment in 1922, and as the author of the Treaty could be saddled with its unpopularity. When in 1922 Bonar Law had formed a purely Conservative administration, with most of Lloyd George's more eminent collaborators outside it, the Conservative Party, like the German people, could claim a new start. When the Radicals denounced all the vulgarities of the election after the war, hanging the Kaiser, squeezing Germany till the pips squeaked, Tories could wash their hands of the matter. 'It was Lloyd George. That was the kind of cheap demagogic thing he said; it was his Limehouse style over again.' In fact, we know that he never

said these things. It was Sir Eric Geddes who made the remark about the pips, and he was the Conservative candidate for the very Conservative borough of Cambridge. Lloyd George has again and again challenged his critics to discover any occasion on which he said that he would *hang* the Kaiser. And if it was a crime to propose the *trial* of the Kaiser, were not Balfour and Milner, who signed the Treaty, equally responsible? But in politics the public memory often only retains the simplest ideas and attributes them to the biggest men. Because Lloyd George was in the first place in the State, because at the time he overshadowed all his colleagues, his fame being greater than the whole of their collective eminence, on his broad back the odium was placed. I know of nothing meaner and more contemptible in British politics than this pitiful evasion. Yet it was magnificently successful. By the simple expedient of keeping silence when these charges were made the Conservatives allowed themselves to become convinced that they had no part or lot in these political follies. Their juniors seem to have been entirely convinced. In 1935, in a debate in the House of Commons Mr. Lloyd George reminded the House that if the severity of the Treaty was excessive, then many present Members of Parliament had put pressure on him by the Lowther telegram to make the Treaty stiff. He mentioned two names, those of Lord Halifax and Sir Samuel Hoare. It created some sensation.<sup>1</sup>

Consideration of this matter leads us to a reflection on the nature of Conservative thought in the last two decades. It has produced very little writing or doctrine of its own. The younger Conservatives who have gone in for politics have been on the whole entirely outgunned in historical knowledge, in economics, and in literary skill by the younger Radicals. They have known this, and in an age where the cant of the fresh and the new has dominated political thinking, they have been at a loss. In effect they have followed wearily in the wake of the Radicals, learning to denounce the peace settlement in the late 'twenties, to despise the gold-standard in the 'thirties, to understand the evils of protectionism after this war had begun. With regard to the Peace Settlement they learned to see the German point of view far in arrears of their Radical contemporaries, with the melancholy result that they began to repeat the Radical ideas

<sup>1</sup> 11th July 1935: 'The only protest I had was from 203 Conservative members, who sent me a telegram to suggest that it was not harsh enough. One was Sir Samuel Hoare, another was Mr Edward Wood, now Lord Halifax. Since then they have mellowed a good deal.'

on the subject at the time when these could be proved wrong not merely by speculation but by experience.

When the Tories began to find that the Peace Settlement was unpopular and, like all other peace settlements known to history, difficult to work and to maintain, they naturally made most of the elements in it which were alien to their general outlook on politics. These were, self-determination and the League of Nations. And just as Lloyd George was a scapegoat for the errors with regard to the Kaiser and Reparations, they found an even better scapegoat for these other matters in President Wilson. With an indifference to historical facts that would be insolent if it was not, in so many cases, innocent, both the League and the doctrine of self-determination were conceived as Wilsonian Liberal fads, academic and intellectual notions divorced from facts. The falsity of such views we have already examined. The League was just as much an English as an American idea. That Woodrow Wilson was so keen an advocate of it is explained by many factors. For one thing he was a jurist and an historian and therefore trained to look at historical fact and political possibilities with a sense of intellectual responsibility. For another he was a very European and, it may even be said, an English personality as opposed to the middle western neo-American type. He was a Virginian by birth. His universities were Virginia, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, all of them well-established centres of learning on the eastern fringe of America. He was learned not only in the political thought of the Fathers of the American constitution, but also in the great English masters. On his visits to England he took care to meet the celebrated Professor Maitland, of Cambridge, the most luminous and stimulating of English jurists. He was in particular an admirer of Oxford, a discerning admirer who studied Oxford academic methods and sought to remodel his own University of Princeton by means of these methods with judicious variations and improvements. If ever a man was formed to be link between what was best in the political traditions of our two nations it was Woodrow Wilson. But he was recognizably a Liberal, and therefore viewed with suspicion by the Tories. Moreover, he was hated by the majority of the wealthy in the Eastern States, and upper-class Englishmen, meeting similar persons in America, were not likely to hear much good of him.

In this country Tories and Radicals alike were dismayed

when the United States defected from the Peace Settlement. But in so far as the American move was largely directed against Wilson, the Tories felt some relief. It absolved them from taking too friendly a view of the specifically Wilsonian elements in the Treaty, elements which they disliked in any case. While it was not practicable to advocate that Great Britain should leave the League of Nations, it was now possible to consider it as an institution which need not be taken too seriously since its power had been impaired. It enhanced the natural Tory dislike of self-determination. As a general principle self-determination was unwelcome. It was an embarrassment to those who during the years before the Treaty with Ireland in 1921 were justifying our dominion over that country. It was embarrassing to those who were reluctant to press on with the education of India in self-government. The Tories had shaken their heads over the grant of self-determination to the Boers of South Africa in 1906, just as the same principles applied to Canada in the Durham Report in 1839 had startled them. Gladstone, looking at Ireland from a European point of view, had decided that Ireland should be free as were Italy and Bulgaria. Salisbury, looking at Ireland from another European point of view, had said that it was like the problem of Prussia and Poland. Gladstone, that is to say, was a self-determinationist, Salisbury the opposite. Salisbury's was the Tory point of view, and he was remembered by older Conservatives as the very best type of unsentimental, common-sense statesman.

For a short period the Tories remembered that the new states of Europe were our allies. That glamour began to fade. Other things were observed about them. They were not first-class powers. Tories respect size. In international politics they are power-snobs. They think of international diplomacy as a concern of the great powers round which the smaller states are to revolve like satellites. But this, although true to a considerable extent of nineteenth-century Europe, had become a different problem in terms of magnitude in the twentieth century. In Europe before 1914 there were only two sizes of state. It was like the English railways, where there is only first and third class. Excluding Spain, which, isolated in her peninsula, was mainly concerned with African problems, Italy, the smallest of the great powers in Europe, had in 1914 a population of thirty-four millions; the largest of the small states, Belgium, had a population of seven and a half millions. But in post-war Europe

the situation had changed. The Austrian Empire had disappeared. Germany, the largest of the powers after Russia, had its area and population reduced. France and Italy had both increased theirs. The following table of populations is instructive. (*Whitaker's Almanack of 1935.*)

Germany . . .	66 millions	Czechoslovakia . . .	15 millions
Britain . . .	45 "	Jugoslavia . . .	14 "
Italy . . .	43 "	Hungary . . .	9 "
France . . .	41 "	Holland . . .	8 "
Poland . . .	32 "	Belgium . . .	8 "
Spain . . .	23 "	Austria, Sweden,	
Rumania . . .	18 "	Portugal, Greece . .	6 "

No longer were there only first- and third-class powers. There were now second-class powers, states able to play the role so often performed by Bavaria, Savoy and Sweden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Professor Gilbert Murray, in a speech, once referred to these new powers as 'eight-inch gun' states.

It is true that population alone does not give the full measure of the strength of a State. For example, Poland was not well enough equipped in heavy industry to put forth the resistance which her large population suggested she might make. Czechoslovakia had great armament industries, but was surrounded by German territory on three sides. Moreover, the population of these states was not homogeneous, Poland had a small German minority and a large Ruthenian minority; Rumania had Germans and Magyars; Czechoslovakia, Germans and some Magyars. But this cuts both ways. If these minorities were a source of concern to the governments from the military point of view, they were also denied to the possible enemy as subjects whom he could train and enlist in his armies. Regarded from the point of view of power politics, the succession states were a formidable insurance against the revival of German and Hungarian militarism. In 1914 Austrian guns made by the Skoda Works in Pilsen battered down the forts of Namur and Liège and upset all calculations as to the speed of the German advance in Belgium. The scheme of the makers of the Peace Settlement did not envisage the possibility that Germany would be able to occupy all Bohemia without a blow, incorporate the youth of the German Sudetenland into her armies and use the Skoda Works to manufacture tanks with which to conquer the whole of France. It is strange to reflect that the change of

opinion that made all this possible was effected, so far as the Conservative forces in the country were concerned, in the name of 'realism'.

When I said that Tories were power-snobs I did not mean to belittle considerations of power in international politics. I meant by the word snobs that they were impressed by the most obvious symptoms of power. They looked to the biggest and most blatant powers, just as a man who thinks he can make friends with an earl underrates the value of an old baronetcy. If you set your standard for a great power at about forty millions of population, and an Englishman had better not set it any higher, then everything under that can be rated as not a great power. But, as we have seen, the relative magnitudes had altered considerably. A truly realistic survey of power politics in Europe implied complex calculations as to the role the second-class powers might play. To dismiss them as small states and leave it at that was both arrogant and ignorant.<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Churchill pointed out after the German occupation of Austria, Czechoslovakia had an army several times larger than that of Great Britain.

It is certainly true that a Europe consisting of many states is a Europe in which there are many grounds for quarrel. Since the end of the Roman Empire Europe has been in that condition. There have been times when it almost seemed as though this state of affairs would end. Louis XIV, and later Napoleon, came near to attaining such a hegemony. Both failed owing to the efforts of Britain. In 1914 Europe was not plagued with so-called small states stretching from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, but this did not preserve the Peace. The theory that the self-determination of Europe left the way open to war depends on two assumptions. The first is that they would quarrel amongst themselves and so come to blows. This might

<sup>1</sup> The ignorance of quite well-educated people as to the populations of European countries is remarkable. On New Year's night 1932-3 a BBC announcer 'taking listeners for a tour' of the capitals of Europe came to Warsaw and observed, with incredible insolence and frivolity, that Poland was a small country which was spending a large part of its income on armaments. The remark aroused some controversy. At the time I tried the experiment of asking many people what they thought the population of Poland was. A common answer was 'four millions'. So far as I remember none came near the correct figure. Again, in 1942 I wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* on the question of England's war effort and pointed out that the population of England without Wales and Scotland was 38 millions, nearly four-sevenths of the whole white population of the Empire, which does not exceed seventy millions. Many Englishmen expressed to me great surprise at hearing this.

in due course have happened, but up to 1939 it did not happen. Italy fought a colonial war, and Spain fought a civil war, but the so-called cat-and-dog states of Middle and Eastern Europe remained at peace, not indeed because they loved each other, but because they feared war, and one side, the succession states, was stronger than the other. The second is that the new states were not strong enough to resist Germany. This proved to be true, but not until five years after the Nazi revolution, five years during which Germany was allowed to defy every disarmament clause of the Treaty of Versailles. The smaller states which are said to have been futile because they were not in a state to resist a great power, to wit Germany, were until about 1935 left with ample power to deal with her, if they combined together. They were left with full juridical rights to do so. If it is said that these harsh and unfair clauses of the Treaty were no longer morally operative, then there was another part of the Treaty on which they could legitimately fall back, namely, the Covenant of the League of Nations. If a critic denounces the self-determination of nations as being in itself no guarantee of peace, it should be replied that the makers of the Treaty never dreamed that it would be. If they had supposed that self-determination was a panacea, then it would have been idle to set up the Covenant of the League. But the Covenant envisaged just those national animosities which lead to war.

But the new states had other vices in Tory eyes in addition to being deemed to be small. One of these, quite simply, was that they were new. The Conservative mind was irritated by having to become accustomed to this new and improbable looking map of Europe. It took some years for us to learn how to pronounce Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia. And then there were the changes of place name, Pilsen-Plzen, Pressburg-Bratislava, Posen-Poznan, Agram-Zagreb, Spalato-Split, Kolo-svar-Cluj. Everything was easier in the old days. The new states' histories and languages were strange. It is significant that in debates in the House of Commons in 1920 on the desperate condition of Central Europe some Conservative members were able to say that they had visited it recently. They had been to Vienna and to Budapest. None spoke of having been to Prague, Belgrade, Warsaw or Bukarest. Mr. Harold Butler, in *The Lost Peace*, has noted that no British statesman of first rank ever visited these capitals. A general disrespect for the new states set in. Those who set store by aristocratic tradition

noted they were states ruled very much by peasants and small bourgeois. Some were only republics, others had monarchies, but not of ancient vintage. People began to sigh for the old Austrian Empire and to say that there would be no peace in Europe until there was some strong power like Austria to keep it in order. This wholly overlooked Austria's deliberate choice of war as a solution for the Serbian problem in 1914. But during the years of war and after, attention was focused on Germany, and it was felt somewhat illogically that because she had been the greatest menace to us she and not Austria must also be the more guilty. By an extraordinary irony both Radicals and Tories in the post-war period came to sentimentalize the good old Austrian Empire, but for different reasons. The Tories regretted it because it was old, it was large and it was an Empire ; the Radicals softened their hearts towards it because it was an enemy, it was defeated and it was a large free-trade area.

Vienna and Budapest were the object of much sympathy amongst our Conservatives. To some extent there was good ground for this, because both cities and peoples suffered in the post-war economic confusion, and the City of London and private organizations soon bestirred themselves to come to the rescue. Loans arranged under the authority of the League provided in the end for the financial reconstitution of these countries and were successful until the end of the 'twenties. But the Austrians had other assets in the eyes of travelling Englishmen. They had charm ; they were gentlemen.<sup>1</sup> Now when we are thinking of such grave issues as the maintenance of peace and the avoidance of such an awful event as a general European war, to be influenced by considerations such as whether certain people have or have not charm is frivolous in the highest degree. If otherwise serious and intelligent persons do allow such considerations to affect them, it can only mean that they do not consider that anything serious is at stake. English Tories do not talk like that when dealing with things near and important to them, otherwise they would have had to ask themselves whether the pleasanter manners of Southern

<sup>1</sup> There is a story told of a young Hungarian nobleman who was a student at Oxford at the time of the General Strike. He went to the Head of his College and asked for permission to go with some of his English friends who were going off to work at the docks at some port. The Head refused on the ground that only British subjects should engage on such work since it was a domestic political dispute. The young nobleman pleaded earnestly, ' Oh, Sir, please let me ~~go~~ ; I do so hate ~~ze~~ poor.'

Ireland as opposed to the rougher ways of Ulstermen, did not constitute an argument for Irish Home Rule. I have never heard that such considerations were ever urged. But during the years when international war was no present danger, such facile notions built up a slow deposit of prejudice which in the end was of political importance. When it became evident at the eleventh hour that our own personal security was bound up with the fate of the succession states, it did matter a great deal that so many people in England had learned to dislike them and to like their enemies.

And so the forces of both wings of political feeling of England closed round the Treaty in a terrible encircling movement. For different reasons they came to despise it and to set little value upon it. It had crowned one of the greatest and hardest fought victories in our history ; it sought to ensure us against perils which we had by the smallest margin escaped, but yet, such is the instability of political moods, such is the perversity of the movements of political sentiment, that over this great instrument of peace is written one of the strangest epitaphs of human history, *VICTRIX CAUSA DEIS PLACUIT SED VICTA VICTORIBUS*

## Chapter Four

### THE IGNORING OF THE COVENANT

ARTICLES 1 to 26 of the Treaty of Versailles make it a more far-reaching agreement than any of the previous treaties which concluded a great European War. They comprise the Covenant of the League of Nations. This was an attempt to make all possible provision for the avoidance of war and the enforcement of peace. In effect it sought to establish two things, a forum for consultation and conciliation on all matters which might lead to war and a method of bringing pressure to deter or to defeat a nation which attacked a neighbour. Although there was nothing inconsistent in these two purposes, two schools of thought began to form, one which held that it could only be usefully employed as a forum and the other which conceived it as an instrument.

Before we discuss these two conceptions it would be well to examine some charges brought against the League by various kinds of critic. The first charge came from the Radical side in this country ; it was 'a League of Victors'. This put a stigma upon it in many sensitive minds. Those who made it were on the whole persons who approved of the League idea in general. It might be said that they should have asked themselves how the League could have been founded if there had not been an Allied victory. A victorious Germany would not have founded such an institution, and a Germany which had made a compromise peace with her military structure intact would not have been a suitable member of such a League. But the critics who spoke of the League of Victors had a reasonable plea to urge when they said that Germany should have been admitted at once to full membership. This proposal, which was made by Labour members in the House of Commons in the Treaty debates, would have had the merit of striking while the iron was hot, a bold act of conciliation. Allied public opinion, however, was not ready for such a step, and various events cooled the ardour for a policy of trust and fulfilment. Such events were the sinking of the German battleships in Scapa Flow by their German crews, an incident which did not encourage the policy of trusting former enemies. The publication of the war

memoirs of Admiral Tirpitz and General Ludendorff also kept suspicion alive, since they showed a picture of a Germany organized for war, regretting in retrospect only practical errors, and not offences against humanity and good faith. While many people derided such revelations as the voice of a Germany dead and gone, more conservative-minded men were sceptical.<sup>1</sup> The failure of the attempt of the reactionaries to gain power in the Kapp putsch in 1920 was perhaps an opportunity to bring Germany into the League, but it was not taken.

The charge that the League was only a League of Victors shaded into another charge : that it was a League to preserve the *status quo*, to rivet the unjust provisions of the Treaty of Versailles for ever upon Europe. In this charge Radicals and Tories could in due time combine. The memoirs of Lord Snowden and Lord Wedgwood show that these two potent figures on the Left made it clear that they could never be sound League men owing to their distaste for the Treaty. The realist, when he came to think about the matter, was uneasy about the perpetuation of the *status quo*. To him it came to appear self-evident that the Treaty unduly constricted Germany. Germany was a great nation and could not be expected to live forever within her diminished frontiers. It was flying in the face of nature to expect her to do so.<sup>2</sup> If therefore the League meant stereotyping the frontiers of Versailles, it was a feeble dam which would be swept away by elemental force. Events seem to have justified this opinion. The dam proved to be feeble ; the elemental force arose and swept it away. The frontiers of the Treaty have been revised. Impressive as these considerations are, they have to be balanced against the fact that when we found that the elemental force was well away on its career, we in this country decided to stop it. As I write these lines (November 9th, 1942) it begins to look at last as though we may succeed. When we have succeeded we shall have to establish something very much like the frontiers which were thought to be so unrealistic. The elemental force will have to

<sup>1</sup> It was not only shallow-minded radicals who were convinced that militarism in Germany was dead. Lord Haldane, as sagacious and far-sighted a statesman as any that have held high office in this century, gave his opinion in the House of Lords in 1920 that militarism in Germany would not revive for a hundred years.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Lothian, for example, in a letter printed in *The Times* of 5 May 1936, declared : 'I am inclined to think, despite Sir Norman Angell's terror, that a strong Germany will be the best security for peace and stability.' Whether Sir Norman Angell's fears or Lord Lothian's hopes represented the greater ~~realism~~ is an interesting subject for speculation.

be disposed of. That is the declared policy of our rulers to-day, Churchill, Eden, Cripps, Cranborne. I do not know whether to call them realists or idealists, I only know that they are not for the time being impressed by the need for yielding to elemental forces. It will be interesting to see whether the old realist school revives after the war.<sup>1</sup>

But the accusation that the Covenant of the League stereotyped the *status quo* of the Treaty must take account of Article 19:

'The Assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world.'

It may be said that this article was purely for show, that there was little chance of the League accepting it. The vested interests of the victorious states in Europe were too strong to permit them to accept any proposal of modification. This may be so, in which case the realist might have quietly accepted the fact. *Uti possidetis* is a notably realistic maxim of statesmanship. But if he could not accept it, then his only honest and practical course was to advocate the withdrawal of Britain from the League. Before doing this he might first have demanded that Britain should raise the question of revision at the League Assembly at Geneva and put the matter to the test. Then he could rend his garments and shake the dust from his feet. But in the Conservative circles which disdained, derided and neglected the League, there was no serious move to do this. In any case, the charge of insincerity is false if preferred against the principal authors of the Covenant. They did not regard revision as an empty phrase, certainly not Smuts, who wanted to revise the Treaty before it was signed, not Cecil, who in Parliament urged the importance of taking revision seriously, not Wilson, who in his last public speech to the American people in 1923 accused France and Italy of not observing the spirit of

<sup>1</sup> It is not entirely dead. Mr. E. H. Carr in his book, *Conditions of Peace*, published in the spring of 1942, suggests that a period of one year's disarmament of Germany would suffice. Prolonged disarmament he rejects because of its 'poisoning' effect on the nation thus treated. He argues, sensibly enough, that if a defeated enemy does rearm it will have the newest and best weapons, whereas the victors may have a large quantity of obsolescent weapons. But this assumes that the defeated nation should and will be allowed to rearm. It is true that we cannot count on retaining the same attitude to our enemies as we have now or will have on the morrow of victory. But perhaps there are some lessons that can be learned at the second attempt. This time we may have harder hearts and cooler heads.

the Covenant. But the working of the League system fell to other and lesser men, the haughty and rigid Poincaré, the vague and unprecise Baldwin, and to Mussolini, the declared apostle of opportunism and violence.

The third charge against the League was that it was weak because it left intact the principle of national sovereignty, and thus left individual governments to decide whether and how far they would act. But no one who remembers the political feeling of the time, or who studies it in retrospect, can fail to know that it was quite impossible to induce any nation to abandon its sovereign power. Federation was not possible then ; it may be an impossible dream even now. But it was not the people who wanted sovereignty to be abandoned in favour of an international power who brought the charge of neglect. It came from the realists and was used by them as a *reductio ad absurdum*. This was their argument : You are trying to do something which cannot be done unless states voluntarily resign their sovereign independence. Under the Covenant of the League they preserve their sovereignty. Therefore you are attempting the impossible. Drive away then these absurd chimeras. Since states will not behave as you would want them to behave, accept the fact. Do not bind them with bonds of paper.

This is, indeed, an impressive argument, and it is to be regretted that it was not more boldly stated as a political issue to be settled one way or another. But everyone did want peace and some way of ensuring it had to be found. Before 1914 we had a world of states, free and independent, some of whom were tied by alliances and understandings, and it had ended in a world war. (It is important to remember this. The fact that there has been a world war after the Covenant was adopted does not do away with the fact that there was a world war before the Covenant had been thought of.) The defenders of the League replied to these charges that it was only a beginning. We had to start somewhere. If we could not have a federation of the nations, we could have an alliance of the nations for the solid and substantial object of maintaining peace. Twenty-two states were in alliance at the time of the Treaty. The pressure of events had brought that about. Was it absurd to recognize that fact ? Unless the members of the League fell apart suddenly into two nearly equal camps, which was not likely to happen and in effect did not happen, the many could restrain

the few. To hope for this was not to appeal to an impossible perfectibility in human nature, to rely on the peacefulnesss and brotherliness of man. It was quite the opposite. If man could, contrary to all human experience, be expected to be peaceful and averse to force when he could use it with impunity, then there would be no need for covenants or sanctions. All that was asked was a certain degree of forethought, a recognition of the fact that war was now a world problem. Four years of war might have taught us a lesson that we could not have learned in forty years of peace.

This lesson was not learned by a sufficient number of people in a sufficient number of states. Therefore it began to be said that the League depended on people and nations acting in a way that could not reasonably be expected of them. This may have been an acute estimate of the situation, but those who made that estimate and who at the same time did not want to see another war, were bound in common sense to provide some other remedy. On the Continent of Europe there were such people. The military and nationalistic leaders of France placed little faith in the League, but they could rely on French military power supported by her allies, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, and if things worked out well, Italy and Great Britain. In this country the realists who distrusted the League had nothing concrete like this to fall back upon. They drifted apart from France, could reckon on no support from the United States, had had to accept the ending of the Japanese alliance, were bound by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921, and did not risk their political skins by advocating a dominating air-power. How did they hope that peace could be preserved ? The only answer as far as I can see is that they counted on peace continuing, and if it was threatened they hoped to improvise some settlement. This was realism, but realism of a very empty and negative kind. To define realism as merely opposing idealism is clearly not enough. Realism to be worthy of the name should be positive, but it is perhaps an evidence of the stridency and ubiquity of post-war idealism that it should have had such a remarkable effect on the realists as to make them feel that if they could only put a stop to ' that nonsense ' they had done all that was necessary, or at least all that was practical. When the League system collapsed in failure in the Abyssinian War the attitude of many people was a surprised astonishment that a common-sense country like England could

ever have had to do with such absurdities. One is reminded of the words of the old Scottish judge in Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* when told of the death of his wife, which set him musing on his married life: 'Yon was a daft-like business.'

But those who refused to believe that a sufficient number of the nations of the world would ever combine in positive action to prevent war passed very quickly into supposing that the League did not even imply an attempt at realizing such a policy. They chose to consider that the creators and the advocates of the League were all pacifists, people who thought that aggression could be conjured away without force. This was true enough of some advocates of the League, but bore no relation to the document itself. For the Covenant of the League was quite precise about this matter. The effective article is Article 16. It would be interesting to know how many of the politicians who derided the League had read this article. One prominent Conservative member declared in 1936 that he had just read Article 16 and was startled to realize how far it committed us.<sup>1</sup> He was not a young man, and therefore he had had sixteen years during which he had leisure to reflect on the matter. Indeed, the disregard with which this cardinal article in the most solemn engagement which a British Government had ever signed is a remarkable event in our political history. A like insouciance in respect of our Treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium might have dispensed us from the unpleasant necessity of making it a *casus belli* in 1914. To do this school of thought justice, however, it must be observed that they displayed a similar care-free spirit over the Treaty of Locarno, in spite of the fact that that instrument was highly thought of because it was less than the Covenant and recognized such self-evident maxims of common sense as that the British people would never go to war over the Polish question.

It might be well at this point to recite the actual terms of the famous Article 16:

'Should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under articles 12, 13, or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the

<sup>1</sup> Sir Alan Anderson, member for the City of London and Director of the Bank of England. Letter to *The Times*, 7th May 1936: 'Until last summer I expect that many people like myself had taken the Articles of the League of Nations for granted, but when suddenly it appeared that we might find ourselves at war with our friend Italy. . . I read the Covenant of the League.' He goes on to advocate the abandonment of Articles X and XVI.

League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade and financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

'It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several governments concerned what effective military, naval or air-force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League.'

'The Members of the League agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this Article, in order to minimise the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the covenant-breaking state, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any Members of the League which are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League.'

In the light of this article it seems absurd to pretend that the League was intended to be only a forum or clearing house for international disputes and not an instrument for the *enforcement* of peace. It could reasonably be contended that the League should only be a forum and that to try to make it more was illusory and therefore dangerous. But those who believed this were bound to labour day and night to make our country withdraw from such an alarming commitment as Article 16. It may have been the height of folly to bind ourselves by a document which stated that any nation which went to war in defiance of its covenants had *ipso facto* committed an act of war against us. But a nation which talks as much as ours does about the sanctity of treaties, should either have prepared to observe this commitment or denounced it. Field-Marshal Smuts in his famous speech in Westminster Hall in October 1942 stated that after the last war our plans for peace were at once too ambitious and too vague. But Article 16 is usually attacked because of its unnecessary precision. The vagueness lay not in the Covenant itself but in the policy of our own and other governments in the development of the system which the article implied.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One hesitates to criticize a statesman so deservedly famous and so justly admired as Field-Marshal Smuts. But as one listened to his philosophic generalizations about the failure of the post-war security system, it was difficult to believe that the speaker was one of its authors. He had been in

If the League was too ambitious an attempt to enforce peace, then those who claim this are under an obligation to show how any weaker or less rigid system would have been better. The forum school of thought, that is, those who were willing to preserve the League minus all coercive intention and power, seem to have very little to rest upon. The League gave us a centre, namely, Geneva, a regular method of consultation in the meetings of the Council and of the Assembly. There disputes could be aired and compromises made. Arbitration was more readily available for those willing to accept it. But if any important State should choose to be obstinate and refuse to accept agreement, we were no better off than in the days of the old independent diplomacy. In many ways we were worse off, for a decision of the Council of the League which was unwelcome to any power had the form and aspect of a judgement. It had everything to wound and anger the State adversely criticized and nothing to deter it. We may take a hypothetical example. In 1908 Austria-Hungary annexed the province of Bosnia by unilateral action contrary to Treaty engagements. Russia was the principal party injured. Unable to oppose by force, she yielded; a very nasty crisis was passed and the peace of Europe was saved—for six years. If the League had then existed, the matter would doubtless have come before the Council. With Germany no doubt dissenting, the Council would have presumably condemned the annexation. Lacking unanimity the Council would probably have been helpless to alter the situation by restraining Austria. But Austrian and German opinion would have been irritated and inflamed to a dangerous extent. International relations would have been more seriously embittered. A forum for international diplomacy without the possibility of enforcement was like a law court making judgements without officers to carry out its decisions.

I have often heard it said that this was the fundamental fallacy behind the League system. But this is not true of the founders and first advocates of the League, of men like Wilson and Cecil. They devised Article 16 and they meant it to be taken seriously. It may be said that the article itself only made the room in which the Covenant was written. Like all those who helped to make it he was not satisfied with all its provisions. But for several years he appointed Professor Gilbert Murray to be the representative of his government in the League Assembly, and Murray was always a good sanctionist. Did Smuts approve of this or not? The propensity of statesmen to speak of events which they helped to shape as though they had only heard of them in text books always has, and no doubt always will, irritate and mystify historians.

juridical statements and did not make any practical provisions. This is true, but it was only intended as a beginning. Its authors were practical statesmen who realized that in the year 1919 the world was not ready to elaborate all the mechanism of international security, and that the weariness of war gave us at least a few years' grace in which to prepare more convincing measures. This attempt was made within five years of the signing of the Covenant. In the year 1924 the famous Geneva Protocol was worked out, a document which invited the members of the League to prepare measures whereby they would pool military and other resources according to their geographic situation and power in order to defeat the aggressor power.<sup>1</sup> This was to follow both the logic and the common sense of the Covenant, and whatever Anglo-Saxon minds may think, logic and common sense are not necessarily opposites. Mr. Harold Butler, a well-informed and judicious observer, has stated that the Geneva Protocol was the best and last attempt ever made to put 'teeth into the League', to make it a practical instrument of security.<sup>2</sup> It had the support of the French and many European states. Its principal enemy was the British Government, which opposed it on principle and also was glad to quote the dislike of the Dominions, which were moved by isolationist sentiment.

Now there were a great many difficulties about the protocol. Perhaps we should not have accepted it as it stood, but should have persevered to improve it in various ways. But it was rejected as a dangerous entanglement. Whatever errors it contained were averted by the supposed wisdom of English intuitionist thought in its great victory over French logic. The League continued without those measures which its foremost advocates called for. In this incomplete form it was put to the test. In 1931, when Japan occupied Manchuria, a crisis arose. Here the League required for its success the co-operation of a non-member, namely, the United States. It may perhaps be said that even with the Protocol system the Japanese danger could not be met without American help.<sup>3</sup> It may be that American help in any practical form was never likely to be

<sup>1</sup> W. M. Jordan, *Great Britain, France and the German Problem 1918-39*, p. 209. 'For the Covenant and the Protocol alike involved the exercise of coercive power by the League; the Protocol differed from the Covenant in the extension of coercion to a wider range of disputes. But the difference constituted a vital distinction which deserves elaboration.'

<sup>2</sup> H. B. Butler, *The Lost Peace*, pp. 33-5.

<sup>3</sup> The co-operation of non-members of the League was provided for in Art. XVII.

given. The ingrained isolationism of America proved even more formidable in the decade 1931-41 than the most pessimistic Europeans imagined. But American help was more likely to come if the American people could have seen a system of military and economic co-operation carefully planned out. As it was, we had the worst of both worlds. As the League and the Covenant were still in being, Geneva was made the forum for discussion and a commission of investigation sent out. Japan was duly shown to have committed aggressive acts and she resigned from the League. But no sanctions were imposed. Everything was done to wound and offend and nothing to restrain. The exact truth about the British and American action in this matter is still not quite clear. It is certain that we incurred much odium and contempt in America for failing to go further and for refusing to accept diplomatic initiatives from Washington in invoking the Nine-Power Treaty which regulated the action of the powers to China. But there is, so far as I know, no evidence that the United States Government were prepared to think of the matter in general-staff terms and to assume any military responsibilities. Both governments were very anxious to believe that the other was a false starter and so to avoid trouble. But if it is said that Japan's successful aggression in Manchuria was due to the weakness of the League, then those who say so must show how it would have been averted without the League. It might have been more easily hushed up and condoned, but there is little in Japan's subsequent policy to make us suppose that this would have stopped her from proceeding further. The question is: Would the British and American governments, freed from the pedantries of the League Covenant, have made war on Japan on this issue? The answer is No. Even although we were then relatively stronger in the East than in 1941, even although Japan was more vulnerable economically than she afterwards became, I cannot believe that either country was willing to have war.

It is, however, just possible that Conservative and military circles in this country might have been more militant in this issue if there had been no Covenant, because then they could have envisaged the situation more calmly as a danger to ourselves. But because of the League Covenant the Radicals demanded action and the Conservatives were enraged and nauseated by the spectacle of these enemies of all military enterprise suddenly demanding the services of the forces which

they had all contributed to starve and which many had denounced as infamous. On the other hand, if it had been a matter merely of national and imperialist interest, the Radical forces would have lacked a warrant for military action which they found in the Covenant ; nothing less than the Covenant could have inclined them to war.

But while the League, owing to the absence of America from its Council, was impeded in acting against Japan, it had better prospects in Europe. In 1935 it was tested, when Italy invaded Abyssinia, a country which she had sponsored for full membership against the natural doubts which the British Government felt about Abyssinia's political immaturity. On this occasion the British Government, a predominantly Conservative Government whose predecessors had rejected the Protocol, a government which had refused to set a single office working on the difficult and elaborate task of preparing for the enforcement of sanctions, moved at the eleventh hour for invoking Article 16. Yet the machinery worked. The Council met and declared Italy an aggressor. Economic sanctions were invoked and partially applied. It was not Geneva that was at fault. In the circumstances of that war there was time for the sanctions policy to work. The invasion began in October, and the Abyssinian armies did not break until February of the next year. There was no lack of speed in the central organs of the League. It had been said that the statesmen of some of the smaller powers were venal and could be bribed by a greater power to obstruct the proceedings ; it did not happen. It had been said that some power outside the League would take advantage of the troubled situation and actively assist the aggressor power. It did not happen. Russia which had been outside was now a well-behaved member. Germany which had left the League waited to see how things would go. It was not until the Italian victory was complete that the Germans occupied the Rhineland. It was the failure of the governments of Great Britain and France to act with energy that brought about the easy Italian success. Laval, apparently a sound Conservative statesman, was in power in France with the support of the Right. That he had been in his younger days a Socialist made him if anything the more impressive.<sup>1</sup> Laval, whatever may be said of his honesty in financial

<sup>1</sup> At the Stresa Conference in April 1935 the three Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and Italy met. Between them they disposed of the force necessary to keep Europe at peace. All three were at the head of what may be called Conservative Governments, all three were ex-socialists.

affairs, was a more consistent Conservative statesman than his colleagues in England, Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare. He was also much less of a demagogue, and firmer in resisting puffs of inconvenient idealism from the Left. He had always supposed that the League of Nations was nonsense. He never doubted that it was a vague shadow against the substance of an alliance with Italy. He was therefore determined that, whatever resolutions were passed at Geneva, France was not going to war with Italy. How could he have supposed that sensible English Conservatives would be stampeded and rushed off their feet? Baldwin and his colleagues had denounced the conception of sanctions both in general and in particular with reference to Japan. What men like Laval and, as far as I can gather, the British Foreign Office also, considered the basis of Anglo-French policy for Europe was swept away by this outburst of madness. He therefore turned away from England in natural disgust. If ever a man was misled and indeed almost betrayed by his allies it was Laval. In his policy since then there has been a certain consistency. For their failure to grasp the nettle firmly in 1935 the statesmen and peoples of France and England have since suffered, and suffered terribly. But the French can at least complain with some justice that there was a time in 1924-5 when they were prepared to take the League seriously, to organize and to prepare, to make it a useable instrument, to work out blue-prints for the war of all against one which the Covenant envisaged. We refused the initiative. We preferred not to commit ourselves, to cross our stiles when we came to them, to treat situations on their merits, to evade the consequences of a cut and dried 'logical' policy; in a word, we were guilty of all those miserable substitutes for thought which are dignified by the name of Anglo-Saxon empiricism.

To make an analysis of public opinion on the League in this country is not easy. It never became a clear issue before the electors as some other issues had done, Home Rule, Free Trade, the House of Lords, spending to cure unemployment. Every government that held office, Coalition, Conservative, Labour or 'National', maintained this country's membership of the League, framed our treaties in accordance with the League and publicly declared itself to be a supporter of the League. The controversy, in so far as there was any controversy, dealt with the interpretation of the Covenant and how far it should commit us to certain forms of action. Yet anyone who engaged in

discussion about international affairs knew that between the Radical and Conservative elements in politics there was a world of difference.

The Conservative attitude was broadly one of distrust and contempt. However much Foreign Secretaries and other statesmen might speak of conducting our foreign policy within the four corners of the Covenant, the mass of Conservatives regarded the League as a thing of straw. It was a product of Liberal idealism and the work of the most tiresome Liberal idealist that the world had known since the death of Gladstone, namely, Woodrow Wilson. I do not doubt that in any good London club, in any country house or suburban golf club, in any place where what are generally called the upper and upper-middle classes foregather, anyone who asked the assembled company whether they felt personally more secure for the existence of the League of Nations would have aroused laughter. The simple phrase, 'League of Notions' usually sufficed as a critique. It was not believed by such people that a body of politicians in Geneva meeting round a table could avert a war. It was generally supposed that the League was to solve the problem of peace by mere goodwill, by distilling friendly atmosphere, by relying on the less selfish elements in human nature. There is some truth in this. If the League were to work, the citizens of its principal member states were bound to discard narrow and shortsighted ideas and to accept responsibility for events which might seem remote. But the League did not assume that men and nations would always be peaceful and forgiving. The Articles of the Covenant made it clear that its authors expected that at some time states would be tempted to advance their national aims by means of war. They supposed the worst and made provision for it. That this provision was not carefully elaborated was the fault primarily of the British Conservative Party. However low we may rate the intelligence and sense of the Conservatives, we must ask how it came about that they, capable men in so many ways, should have been so indifferent to the declared basis of our international policy, so ignorant of its implications and so barren in suggesting other policies. I have maintained in an earlier chapter that there was a tendency to think of politics as a matter of 'keeping Labour out', and that this led to a decline in the political intelligence of the more affluent classes. But this is not in itself a sufficient explanation. Most of us find that a large part of our political

views are dictated by the need to resist the ideas of our opponents. Conservative views on the League can only be completely understood in the light of what the Radicals who opposed them at elections were saying about the League.

The two Radical parties declared themselves to be the supporters of the League. However much they differed from each other, they were agreed in this, that the League could not safely be left to the Tories. They were also agreed that there should be a general reduction of armaments, as was foreshadowed by the Treaty of Versailles and by Article 8 of the Covenant. But beyond this their ideas were confused, however well-rounded their official manifestos might appear.

One thing however is clear. The Labour Governments did not materially reduce our armaments. It is worth noting that actually the lowest estimates for defence were those of 1932, when Mr. Neville Chamberlain was at the Exchequer and more than two-thirds of the Members of Parliament were Conservatives. These are merely facts, and in politics a fact may be of much less importance than an impression. The impression that Conservatives had was that the Radicals hated having anything to do with armaments. Nor was this impression baseless ; it is probably true to say that when Conservative ministers presented defence estimates to the House they did so with regret, regret that they were not larger, while Radical ministers also felt regret, regret that they had to be so large. But not only was the Radical movement confused in its views about armaments, it was not agreed about the League. Again it must be pointed out that their official policy was sound enough. Liberals who supported men like Murray and Cecil, and Socialists who put into office a man like Henderson to conduct our foreign affairs, were sane and consistent. Their policy was to take the League seriously, to accept Article 16 with all its consequences and to make the League an instrument for enforcing peace. But the pacifist element could not go as far as this. They could not support a League which was to soil its hands with war, which was to use brutal methods. They hoped that the League would somehow or other prevent war, but not by using any warlike means. We know just how numerous these people were in the year 1935 when the famous Peace Ballot was held. One question was whether the elector favoured the use of military sanctions by the League. Just over two millions of the signatories of the ballot answered, 'No'. This is not a very large proportion of

the whole nation and it comprised only two-sevenths of the people who signed the ballot. But it was a large proportion of the Liberal and Labour parties, for it may be assumed that the majority of those who answered this question in the negative were Radical voters.

The Conservative, distrusting and despising the League from the first, was not encouraged to take it more seriously by what reached his ears from the clamour of its advocates, and these advocates should not have been surprised at this. However, in explaining why the Conservatives in general remained so ignorant of the implications of the League, I am not seeking in any way to excuse them. The League method was the policy of our State. Until it was abandoned formally by us, it was our duty to take it seriously. If it was vague, foolish, idealistic, it should have been replaced by a sensible policy. If it was supported by all the fools and cranks in the country, then sensible men should not only have suspected it but renounced it. The explanation is that the Conservatives would have been ruined electorally if they had denounced the League. They would have suffered a crushing defeat, another 1906, and that would have been followed by 'national ruin'. To that I can only reply that we have had a good deal more in the way of national ruin than any Socialist Government was likely to bring us. The Conservatives won their electoral victories. They did not avert war, they have not averted Socialism, and now they are daily swallowing doses of it that would ten years ago have driven them to a fascist revolution. This cynical, feebly machiavellian policy of clinging to power on terms that are neither honest nor honourable, accepting a present immunity from evil, looking only to the immediate future, saying things that you do not believe and binding yourself not to do that which you think is right, all such cowardly evasions bring their own revenge. Milton has stated it for us in five words, 'To be weak is miserable.'

I am assuming that if the Conservatives had abandoned the League system they would have suffered at the polls in any of the post-war elections. This is the most probable speculation on the subject, but it is by no means certain. They might have profited by it, since in the circumstances of post-war three-party politics they did not need to gain a majority of the electorate, but merely to be the largest of the parties in order to have control of the House of Commons. They might have gained

votes in some quarters. A great number of citizens would have welcomed a party that had spoken out openly against all this 'idealist nonsense' that so many were sick of hearing. Another possibility is that by being 'hard-boiled' about the League they would have given a great access of strength to the Liberal Party. If they had known how much the Socialists dreaded such an event it might have encouraged the Conservatives to bolder action. But if it had led to an electoral disaster, say reducing their representation in the House to little over a hundred, then it would at least have cleared the air. They could then have asked how the Radicals proposed to maintain the peace, they could have set the sanctionists and the pacifists at each other's throats. The country was most unwilling to spend large sums on armaments, even the Tories had no love for a higher income tax. But the country was not so besotted with pacifism as to see its armed forces disappear without a qualm. A Radical government set on unilateral disarmament would soon have made itself very unpopular and not only in dockyard constituencies. If, as is more probable, the triumphant Radical Government had been sanctionist, prepared to use the League as an instrument against aggression, then the Conservatives would have had the pleasure of compelling the Government to face up to the strategic and military implications of Article 16. Very possibly those Radicals who favoured the use of armaments by the League and those who would have no armaments at all would have quarrelled with each other, the Government would have resigned and the Labour Party, split in two, would have gone to the polls to certain ruin.

But there was another and far better policy open to the Conservatives. If instead of cowering in terror before the serried ranks of Labour they had surveyed their enemies' line, looking, as a good general should, for a weak spot, they could easily have found it. It was the point at which the pacifist merged into the sanctionist Radicals, the gap between Henderson and Snowden, between Attlee and Lansbury. It was as clearly visible as the point of junction between the French and the Bavarians at Blenheim was to Marlborough. The Conservatives had only to divide their enemies at this point to throw them into the greatest confusion. While still in office the Conservatives should have said: 'You speak of the Covenant, you ask us to make the League a reality. Very well then, we will. Here is Article 16. Read it. You want us to repel aggression.'

Then we must have the forces necessary for it. We will keep such and such a number of troops of the regular army always ready to move. So many ships and so many squadrons of aircraft will also be permanently on a war footing. It will cost something, it will mean harder and more costly training ; but without this the League is worthless. We and the French will prepare these measures, we will put all possible pressure on the other member-states to contribute their share. Thus there will be available at all times throughout Europe an armed force ready to act. That is our League policy ; is it yours ? If you are League men you must be with us ; if you are pacifists then say so, and we shall know where we are.'

This policy would not necessarily have lost votes, it might have gained them. The Liberal Party would have had to shed its Quaker tail, and the Labour Party would have been split from top to bottom. And all this could have been obtained by merely taking seriously a Treaty to which a British Government had set its signature.

We know that the Conservative Government never even dreamed of such a policy. We may be permitted to speculate how it might have been if Mr. Churchill had been its leader instead of serving under Baldwin, Apollo serving Admetus. We do not know what part Churchill played in the years from 1924-9 when he doddered at the Exchequer playing out the last feeble hand of *laissez-faire*, gold standard economics, ignoring the fruitful ideas and projects of Lloyd George and Keynes, failing to take advantage of the constructive proposals of the Samuel Report on the coal mines. We may yet hear that he was dissatisfied with the aimless international policy of the Government of which he was a member. It may be that if he had been the leader and not a departmental chief, his later policy of arms and the Covenant might have taken form a decade earlier. He alone could have galvanized the party into taking a clear and intelligent line about the League. It may be that the life of the most illustrious of all British Prime Ministers will contain a chapter whose title will seem to posterity the strangest paradox of history, ' While Churchill Slept '.

In fact, the Conservatives were so bored with the endless talk of the League enthusiasts, whom they regarded as fools and cranks, that they had no clear idea of the issues. They took the extreme and most pacifist views as representative of the whole. The result was that when the crisis came with Italy in 1935

they were startled to find that the League which they supposed to be an institution, vague and unreliable, for the avoidance of war, was an institution for which they might have to fight. And their irritation was intense when they observed that those who were telling them to fight were the Radical politicians who, as it seemed to them, had been the enemies of all military preparation. They were now actually telling the fighting classes to go into action. The relatives of naval officers on the Mediterranean station suddenly realized that their men were to be thrown into the front line at the demand of people who had starved the Fleet and poured contempt on military activity. The Labour Party, through leaders like Dalton and Attlee, was sounding the call for battle. The Liberals under Sinclair were no less vocal, and Liberals in the eyes of the Tories were experts in the art of stinting the Navy since the days of Gladstone and Cobden. It is true that if they had studied the Covenant and followed with attention the debates on the Protocol problem in 1924-5, they would have had less reason for being surprised. But they had not been students of these questions.

From the moment that the Covenant was accepted by the British Government it was logical to expect that the leaders of the armed forces of the Crown would have made some plans, however tentative, to prepare these forces for action under the Covenant. But this was not done. In an article in the *Sunday Times* in 1942 Lord Hankey, a statesman continuously in the centre of the machine of Government between the two wars, stated that after the last war the leaders of the Services were told not to expect any major war for fifteen years. From one point of view this may be regarded as showing very remarkable flair and foresight. From another point of view it is an astonishing instance of a failure to harmonize foreign policy with defence policy. As members of the League, we had ruled out all the advantages which could be had from secret alliances or military understandings. Pending a general agreement about disarmament we were bound not to prejudice its chances by engaging in rearmament, and in the Naval sphere we were bound by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921, which had earned for the great Conservative statesman Balfour the honour of the Knighthood of the Garter. Our means of defending ourselves by our own initiative and our own arms were indeed imperfect. Since these facts were known and had been accepted by all parties, then there was only one alternative : to arrange

to defend ourselves in association with others. Britain and France together had sufficient military power to keep Europe secure as long as Germany was disarmed. The lesser states, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Jugoslavia, Belgium, Holland, Greece, could give us powerful reinforcement and valuable bases. Here was a possible means of defence against aggression, but it was the British Government, which had abandoned all other possible policies, that denounced this policy as impracticable or vague. It was not a question of waiting for a major war to come upon us, but for smothering at once any threat of war which might arise. The Covenant gave us full moral justification in such a policy, it ruled out any other policy, as long as the League system stood. These were the contingencies about which our military leaders should have been thinking. Instead we are told that they had instructions to think about a major war in 1935 or thereabouts.

Those who criticize our statesmen and generals for refusing to think of the military implications of the Covenant have however an Achilles heel, not in the arguments which we use but in our general status before our fellow citizens. If the military consequences of the Covenant were so clear and so important, must there not have been something a little odd in the speeches and writings of League supporters, when the other side was told so little about such consequences ? Students of political affairs on the Radical side were seldom military men, and even if they had served in the last war, did not keep up their military activities. Professional Service men seem to have been wonderfully well insulated from all consideration of the League.<sup>1</sup> Much the same could be said of the kind of men who remained in or entered the Territorial Army. I do not suppose that there are any statistics on the subject. I can only say that in my own acquaintance no one that I knew in the services, regular or auxiliary, shared the views I have outlined about the purpose of the League. No one of my acquaintance who shared such views was a member of the Territorial Army, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve or any other military training organization. This strange disjunction between those who wanted to use our arms but were somewhat chary of forging them, and those who

<sup>1</sup> An Admiralty official, now too prominent to be named, when it was suggested that Lord Cecil might make a good Foreign Secretary groaned, 'Oh Lord, we would then be entirely League ridden.' By that he meant, I suppose, driven to further disarmament. As far as I could tell it never occurred to him that the Admiralty might be League-bidden.

wanted arms without any conception of how and when they should be used, was almost certain to bring trouble, to lead to confused counsels in government and perplexity in the public mind.<sup>1</sup> When during the nineteen-thirties Radical members of Parliament again and again demanded that our arms should be used to maintain collective security and stated that they were willing to vote arms for that purpose, they were being perfectly sincere and perfectly rational also. When Tories felt that such pleas were inconsistent, their state of mind is at least understandable. Politicians stepping out of their part and acting out of character puzzle and irritate those who are not close to them in sympathy and doctrine. Tories were shocked when persons they had presumed to be pacifists wanted to hurl the British Navy at Mussolini. Radicals were shocked when sound Imperialists in 1935 appeared so indifferent to the dangers to the Empire implicit in Fascist aggression. Some even refused to believe it. Mr. H. N. Brailsford, a very distinguished Radical journalist who was touring America during the Abyssinian crisis, told American audiences that the sudden change over from anti-sanctions to pro-sanctions executed by the Conservatives was due to their concern for our African Empire. Lord Cecil demanding firm military action was not, to those who understood and admired him, behaving inconsistently ; but to those who disliked him and misunderstood him his conduct seemed queer. Sir Henry Page-Croft, supporting Chamberlain in the policy of appeasement, appeared to those who remembered his jingo ferocity in 1919 a monstrosity of politics. Only that giant among statesmen, our great Prime Minister, seemed convincing in his role as an apostle of arms and the Covenant. Of him at least men could feel that when he said arms he meant arms. The rich versatility of his nature and the varied phases of his career had equipped him to grasp hold of issues which to narrower men seemed incompatible. The Liberal in him could talk of the Covenant with propriety, the Tory in him could

<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1940 I had some conversation with a staff officer returned from Dunkirk. He described his frustration during manoeuvres round about the year 1930 with six men and a flag to represent a whole company. When asked what he then supposed the function of the army was, he replied, 'Oh, imperial police, I suppose.' Asked if he had considered the Covenant of the League and the probability of Italy becoming our enemy, he appeared astonished and said it had never occurred to him. On his own showing he had really no grievance against our under-armament in 1930, since there was apparently no enemy. I, who since 1923 had foreboded an attack by Italy, had to confess that in 1930 I was no great student of strategic problems.

speak of arms with conviction. To quote a schoolboy's naïve but telling description of the Younger Pitt: 'He had a broad mind with room in it for many thoughts.'

It is worth observing at this point the League of Nations Union, the organization that was built up in this country to educate the public in League policy. It was a non-party organization which soon had a large membership. It was in many ways an admirable effort and it did carry out useful education. It aimed at including members of all parties in order that any government in power would have supporters of the League in its ranks. This method may be criticized as being more suitable to American than to British politics. In America policies are often best served by gaining influence in both parties, as the Anti-Saloon League did in its fight for Prohibition. It might have been better to have used the League as a weapon for fighting the Conservatives. Since things have turned out as badly as possible, one is inclined to think that any other course of action would have been better. There were eminent Conservatives who were strong believers in the League policy and who served on the League of Nations Union. Such men as Lord Balfour, Lord Salisbury, Sir Austen Chamberlain were friends who could hardly be cast off without very good reason. But a large part of the driving force of the Union came from the Left; there was found much of the visionary enthusiasm, the crusading spirit, the technical interest and learning and the moral courage to support an ideal. The mass of Conservatives had few of these qualities. A bare assent to the general idea in public and much contempt for it in private was a very common attitude. The League of Nations Union, since it was a non-party organization, was not in a position to threaten any party. But unless a political movement can threaten loss of political support it is less effective as a stimulus. If no one need fear it, no one need heed it very much. It asked candidates to 'support the League'. It was easy to say 'Yes' to this request. But what really mattered was the view that the candidate took of the functions of the League, whether he construed the Covenant strictly or loosely. The average Conservative thought of it as a forum in which disputes could be aired and, if all went well, settled. The League's function was not to do but to be. Radicals with pacifist leanings took the same view. In the centre were men like Cecil and Murray, who held fast to the view that the League was an instrument. But all these various schools of

thought could honestly maintain their membership of the Union.

It might seem reasonable to inquire what were the opinions of the professional advisers of the Government in the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service. This is not easy to answer with chapter and verse, for civil servants are not free to publish their own opinions. Moreover, they may be required to furnish a Minister with a brief for some particular cause and they may do that very well although their real opinions are not represented in the memorandum which they prepare. The Official Secrets Act, and a proper professional reticence, hide many things from the public eye. It is probable that there were some officials at the Foreign Office who had thought out the question of sanctions and who, at least at the time of the Abyssinian crisis, gave clear and straightforward advice. I have heard that the older diplomats in embassies abroad were contemptuous and hostile to the League. Some public statements by such diplomats as Lord Vansittart, Sir E. Lindley, Ambassador in Japan, and Sir Eric Phipps, Ambassador in Berlin, made after their retirement, suggest that these eminent persons considered our foreign policy with little reference to the League. To some, such as Lord Vansittart, the main problem of policy was to watch Germany and prevent her power reviving. No one can refuse him a tribute for his foresight in this matter. Others probably considered it their duty to watch lest the League should lead us into unnecessary adventures. They feared the power of what they thought was a mere misty idealism. I suspect, but I cannot put it more definitely than that, that their main concern was 'to down Bob Cecil'. They knew that British opinion was unwilling to accept commitments in Eastern Europe, but they did approve of committing us to defend France, and that was the policy of the Treaty of Locarno in 1925. At the time it was no doubt quite a good interpretation of English opinion for, as we have seen, both Tory and Radical elements were hostile to the frontiers of Versailles. Only the straitest sect of the devotees of collective security were unsatisfied by Locarno, because although framed to be consistent with the Covenant, it narrowed the issue and relied on the local interest and policies of certain European powers instead of the general principle of resisting aggression.

But there is still a problem to solve. How did it come about that after refusing all initiatives by France and other countries

to make the League an instrument capable of action, after making it clear on the Manchurian question and afterwards that we did not believe in a policy of sanctions, we were almost overnight plunged into a policy of resistance? Had there been an election bringing a Radical Government into power? Had Dalton or Cecil gone to the Foreign Office and carried out a purge of high officials, replacing them with ardent collective security men such as Lord Davies, Mr. Mander, Mr. Noel Baker? We know that none of these things had happened. A huge Conservative majority dominated the House of Commons, Mr. Baldwin was Prime Minister, Sir Samuel Hoare was at the Foreign Office, Mr. Chamberlain was at the Exchequer, Lord Hailsham on the Woolsack, Commander Eyres-Monsell at the Admiralty. We had the right men in the right place. We may surmise that some permanent officials were greatly disturbed at the sudden change, when Sir Samuel Hoare, rushing off to Geneva, rallied the Council of the League to do its duty by the League's newest and weakest member. Bob Cecil had won after all: *Vicisti Galilaie.*

What were the motives of the Conservative Government in making this change of face? One explanation is that they realized that the general public were in earnest about the matter. When it came to the point the average Englishmen did realize that any aggression was a threat to peace, that it was safest to stop the flood at the first trickle without waiting for the torrent. The average Englishman also did realize, more clearly perhaps than his Conservative rulers, that Mussolini was a tyrant and Englishmen have had quite a good nose for the genus tyrant since the days when they confronted Napoleon and the days when they learned to love Palmerston for giving despots the rough edge of his tongue. There was an immense force of public opinion ready to support firm action. There always had been some such force. In politics it is the simple ideas that count. Millions of men had been told in 1918 that we were fighting a war to end war, just as they are being told it now, though usually in slightly different words. Many had believed it, especially the young. Few perhaps cared to repeat the phrase unless they were privileged to wear the triple armour of the prig or the crank. But the idea had taken deep root and in 1935 the moment had come to put it to the test. It was indeed the last chance. But what if this force of public opinion had from the end of the last war been instructed, directed and organized?

What if the nation's leaders (and by that I mean the responsible ministers of the crown, for there was a day, and it has come again, when ministers did lead) had told the people that according to our international engagements we must be prepared at any time to join with other peaceful nations in preserving the peace? Then our diplomatic experts, instead of having at a moment's notice to prepare the elaborate mechanism of sanctions, might have had everything ready to the hand.

We know what actually happened. The Government did not respond to the call, but it bowed to the storm. This is not the place to discuss at length the constitutional issues raised by Mr. Baldwin in asking for a mandate for rearming in order to achieve collective security. You may think with those who believe that this doctrine of mandate is a heresy, that ministers and members of Parliament should form their judgements and do their duty as need arises. You may think that in modern plebiscitarian politics a mandate is necessary. Neither of these theories will explain Mr. Baldwin's conduct. Without dissolving Parliament to obtain a mandate he committed the nation to a policy of sanctions, which, if it failed, would entail us in the most terrible dangers. He then dissolved and got his mandate and proceeded to neglect it. Being, as he was, no bigot in constitutional doctrine, he honoured both sides in the mandate controversy. Even Laval has scarcely shown such bold and flexible empiricism.

I know that these remarks may be dismissed as mere talking for effect. It may be said that the situation was so dangerous and urgent that the Government had to hedge and tack. Its aim was to prevent a general European war, and any means at all were justified to that end. If a demonstration by the League at Geneva might frighten Italy into acquiescence then it was worth trying. If the Hoare-Laval pact of February 1936 which would have given her a share of Abyssinian territory would have satisfied her, then that was worth trying too. But the time for squaring Italy was before she began her war. The time for warning her with the excommunication and anathemas of the League was before she had sent her troops and material to Eritrea. The time for telling other members of the League that we were taking matters seriously and wanted them to cut off trade with Italy and if necessary pool our military forces, was at the very latest the spring and not the autumn of 1935.

None the less those who were out 'to down Bob Cecil' can

say, if they choose, that all the ill effects of allowing play to his ideas came home to roost. We should have kept to solid facts, such as the fact that Italy with her military force and strong and virile Government held the balance of power in Europe. After 1933 there was only one real danger, Nazi Germany. Anything that would build up power against Germany was to be welcomed without being pedantic about abstractions like collective security or the prerogatives of the Lion of Judah. Black men had fallen under the dominion of white men before ; it was not for us to cavil at that. Evil for evil, misery for misery, the subjugation of Abyssinia was a very small thing to be placed against this war, which might have been averted. I cannot prove that this thesis is wrong. Abyssinia might have satisfied Mussolini's craving for land and glory. Italian dislike of Germany might have proved stronger than Fascist dislike of the countries where liberty of thought survived, whose radical papers showered abuse on Fascism, whose citizens harboured Italian exiles. Germany's armed strength might never have reached a point when it would have been superior to that of Italy and France combined. Hitler, with a wary eye on the Brenner Pass, might have continued to follow the path of caution and the way of peace. These things are not susceptible to proof ; at the moment they do not appear probable speculations, but the present time may not be the best for forming a clear opinion.

But the policy of ignoring the League, to be successful, should have been more complete and effected sooner. It was not enough that they had defeated the attempt to tie us to the Geneva protocol. It was not enough that dangerous ideas about general disarmament had failed. It was not enough that Cecil's colleagues in the Conservative Government had stuck to their guns and brought about his resignation in 1927. It was not enough that his friend, Lord Parmoor, who had been Minister for League Affairs in the Labour Government of 1929-31, had also fallen from office. Our signature to the League of Nations' Covenant still stood. Great Britain and the Dominions still remained member-states. The 'sinister' Article 16 remained unamended with all its dangerous consequences. For real safety, for freedom to act in our own interest, for licence to remain inactive in our own interest, this fatal document should have been disavowed. The Covenant had indeed provided for such withdrawal with due notice. Japan had withdrawn ; Germany

withdrew. Until we withdrew, Cecil and his supporters might be impotent in the Conservative Party, only half supported by the Labour Party, unable to hope for much from the weakened Liberal Party, but still they had the law and the prophets on their side. Britain was pledged by her membership of the League and there was always the possibility that the British people, idealistic, generous, short-sighted, too apt to mistake the wish for the power, would one day expect their Government's pledges to be honoured.

A clean renunciation of the League would have been an intelligible policy and might well have been profitable. Equally intelligible would it have been to take the Covenant seriously and work out its implications, bring all the influence that the British name could command to induce other nations to combine with us into making it a real alliance for peace. Hesitating between these two courses was fatal. I do not believe, as many of my American friends do, that there was any sinister force at work, imperialism or capitalism, which hoped to profit by our strange policy of minimum use of the League. The British governing classes, if one may use the phrase, did not like the League, but they did not dream of using it as a cover for any Machiavellian design. They did not think it was of much use for anything. The explanation did not lie in any subtlety of thinking, but in lack of thinking, and Americans should be themselves familiar enough with this method of approach to foreign policy. To burlesque a famous phrase of Gladstone it was a case of the negation of thought erected into a system of government

## Chapter Five

### ENEMIES AND ALLIES

ONE of the difficulties of maintaining steadiness in public sentiment, and therefore a consistent policy after a war, is the complex emotions that we are apt to feel about the war and about our former allies. In the first flush of victory allies exchange banquets and compliments, and rejoice in the defeat of the common enemy. But even while this is happening difficulties arise between the allies over the terms of peace. We know that these inevitable difficulties became acute during the Peace Conference at Paris, and at one time the Italian delegates actually left the Conference. It has often been said that a cardinal error was made when it was decided to hold the Conference without the Germans. This supposes that if the Germans had been present the peacemakers would have been better informed, the German point of view better understood, and the Treaty made more equitable. This may well be true. On the other hand, it is possible that a German delegation at Paris would so have conducted itself that the Allies would have been drawn together and German purposes would have been more deeply suspected. At any rate the German delegates, when they came to sign the Treaty, succeeded in so conducting themselves that Wilson and Lloyd George, two eminently humane and Liberal statesmen, on returning from the ceremony were moved to observe that the Germans were an extraordinary people.<sup>1</sup>

In a nation inclined to generous sentiments like the English, it was natural to look kindly on an enemy which had not only been defeated but which had changed its political system into an imitation of our own. The French, with their own experience of the persistence of national characteristics and trends of foreign policy under different systems of government, were naturally very sceptical. The Germans still seemed dangerous to them. French policy was in a dilemma. If the peaceful German republic was to be preserved, then it behoved the Allies, and in particular the French, to behave towards it with friendliness. The more Germany was admitted to some sort of

<sup>1</sup> Lord Riddell, *Diary of the Peace Conference and After*, p. 74.

equality the more likely were the German democratic parties to retain their power. The more the French harped on the bitter and irreconcilable elements in Germany, the less likely were these elements to pursue appeasement. In the light of actual events it would now seem clear that the only time that appeasement was possible was during the period of the Weimar Republic; that is, up to 1932. In the period after Locarno when Briand in France and Stresemann in Germany were apparently pulling well together the outlook seemed favourable. The prevailing opinion now is that Weimar was never more than a façade and that we were being deceived by it all the time. Certainly Stresemann was never a good internationalist in the sense that Briand or Henderson or Eden was. A final judgement on this question can hardly be passed at the moment, and perhaps it never will be passed. It may remain one of these classic and unprovable problems of history on which students will exercise their critical judgement throughout the centuries. History is not a subject in which it is reasonable to expect certainty.

We have already noticed some of the causes which made Englishmen ready to feel friendly to the Germans. It is easy for the victor to be generous and it is a psychological truth, noticed long ago by Thucydides, that a benefactor likes his beneficiary better than his beneficiary likes him. And as we learned to denounce the harsh terms of the Peace, as we subscribed loans to set German industry on its feet, as we re-established friendly and courteous relations in art and letters, in commerce and social life, we felt that we were doing the Germans a good turn. It was quite a natural thing that the Germans for their part should take all this for granted as a recognition of their virtues and their belief that they had not been responsible for the war. The Germans are good linguists and find English easy. They are admirable hosts and anxious to make a good impression on their visitors. This quality they share with the Americans, and they differ herein from the French and the English, whose self-confidence is, or was, too great for them to care what impression they made. This self-confidence however is a thing which we appreciate more in ourselves than in others. Other bonds between England and Germany are those vague sentiments which are summed up by the word 'nordic' and also, in respect of large parts of Germany, common Protestantism. All this is perhaps expressed better by saying that it is not a Latin country. The Germans also flattered us by

their very great interest in our affairs and their obvious admiration for our qualities. I do not suppose that the performance of the French Army in the last war was much of a surprise to the Germans. They hoped to beat it, but they knew it was large and good. But British military power, and it was was from the British armies that the last and hardest blow came, was a surprise, all the more because they had genuinely believed that the British were becoming soft and decadent. It is not surprising that they thought so, since so many elderly Englishmen were saying so in the years before 1914. Once again in the years before 1939 the Germans thought us decadent and once again they had the same corroboration from people in this country.

The Germans studied our system of government and examined the qualities of our leaders. Shaken in their own leaders they turned to us. A Berlin professor, Dibelius, wrote one of the best recent studies of this country. He was obviously not friendly, but he was curious and admiring. Oswald Spengler, the famous philosopher of history whose work created such a stir in the late 'twenties, was the prophet of the superman. While waiting for his emergence in Germany, he studied ours. It is not surprising that in his *Decline of the West*, a conspectus of universal history, there are nearly as many references to Cecil Rhodes as to Christ. But all this flattering inquiry concealed, more than most of us suspected, a bitter envy and a desire to learn not the secret of English liberalism but the secret of English imperialism. That our imperialism had been for a generation liberal-imperialism, was, I suspect, little understood. But the process of misunderstanding each other went on with mutual satisfaction.

The British attitude to Italy was in the main determined by the rise of Mussolini and the elimination of the Communist danger. The Fascist march on Rome made Italy virtually an enemy state to Liberals and Socialists. Conservatives, whatever their opinion of Mussolini as a man might be, could not withhold some admiration from the Fascist State. Some Tory publicists, such as Sir Charles Petrie, carried their admiration of Mussolini to great lengths. But underneath the differences which politics brought about in opinions on Italy, there was something of a common feeling underneath. Italy had been an ally and to that extent was at a disadvantage. I am not here speaking of what I call the masochistic sentiment of many Radicals who found

their satisfaction in damning the victors because they were victors. It is a well-attested fact of history that almost as much bitterness is bred between two nations in alliance as between two nations at war. Nor is this in the least surprising. With your enemy your relations are at least simple. He may kill you, which is unfortunate ; you may kill him, which is splendid. But you do not have to talk his language or hear him talk yours. You do not have to buy goods in his shops, to requisition and eventually pay compensation for his houses. You do not have to concert military measures with him. Whatever he does he cannot let you down, but your ally can and inevitably, in a long campaign, there will come a times when you will consider that he has let you down.

With regard to Italy both the French and the British were ungenerous after the last war. Mr. Lloyd George, in his war *Memoirs*, protests strongly against this. With characteristic foresight he was working hard to make the French behave with greater civility to the Italians. But in general the kind of talk that British people, especially ex-soldiers, indulged in with regard to Italy was wounding in the highest degree. It was not sufficiently realized that the last war had been something of a luxury for Italy, that she had only entered it with the support of about half the nation. It was not in the nature of things that Italians would fight with the same intensity as ourselves. The Italian Army was not so well prepared nor had it the same ancient traditions as England, France, Prussia or Austria. Its greatest hero had been Garibaldi, but his name was not acceptable to the clerical party. But Italy did fight. We had the advantage of her Navy and of her coastline. She held large Austrian armies and when attacked by the Germans at Caporetto Italian armies retreated, as did ours and the French in 1918, but they re-formed and held the attack in the end. When you are dealing with an ally whose accession to your cause is not a thing to be taken for granted, an extra dose of politeness is called for.

The result was that the Italians were bitter, for they were in no ignorance of what was being said about them. Mr. Harold Nicolson has pointed out more than once that the Italians hate being praised for their artistic gifts. Mussolini's speech of December 4th, 1942, has confirmed this in so many words. He even objected to being told that the Italians were happy. It is true that there has been nothing more infuriating than the

Italians' pose as a 'revisionist' state, discontented with the Peace Treaty. When one reflects that it gave them not only *Italia irredenta* but the German Southern Tyrol, Fiume and Zara on the Adriatic coast and that they were allowed to retain the Dodecanese Islands which were due to Greece, it is absurd to call them ill-used. Indeed, Liberal critics of the Treaty at once fastened on the Tyrol as an example of its iniquity. But there was no reason why we should have insulted them about their part in the last war. Mussolini used to be praised by many for giving the Italians back their self-confidence. We may legitimately regret that he did so, but there was no need to encourage that loss of self-confidence as we did in the years after the war.

America after the last war lost no time in setting us a problem in international behaviour by rejecting the Treaty, which was based on the assumption that she would participate in it. I think it is fair to say in this country the general feeling about America in 1918 was one of admiration and humble gratitude. Although many Englishmen in the heat of war cursed Wilson for sending his diplomatic notes when we hoped for soldiers and many wished that Theodore Roosevelt had been President, there was a general understanding of the American position. This understanding was deepened, after America had entered the war, by the process of education that went on. I do not believe that people in this country are or were quite as ignorant of American affairs as is often said. I am warmly in favour of the teaching of American history and politics and I have been actively engaged in it for many years past. I hope there will be much more of it. But in 1917 the broad facts were, I believe, known to most people with any general knowledge. We did know that the President alone could not declare war. We had every reason for knowing that America teemed with Irishmen who hated the name of England, that there were millions of Germans amongst her people, that American independence had been won by war against ourselves. When therefore the American Government could no longer endure the illegalities and barbarities of German warfare, the British people were deeply impressed. There was no hesitating and waiting to be attacked, no slow edging and creeping to the brink of war. Wilson brought his country into war by his own volition in a moment of time. He brought it into the war lock, stock and barrel, imposed conscription and organized production and the

building up of reserves of food. This was more than we had ever expected or hoped for.

President Wilson, when he visited England in January 1919, was received with the deepest respect. But as we have seen he soon became an object of criticism to some of our extreme Tory M.P.s. He stood so clearly for principles which they suspected, and such criticism was inevitable. What was not so readily to be expected was that Radicals in this and his own country should so soon have allowed themselves to be disillusioned. A little more balance, more historical perspective, more sense of the intractable nature of political problems should have guarded them against this, but such stability of mind was lacking. Later there grew up a generation of younger Radicals in both countries who came to regard Wilson as being a Puritan, a Victorian, deadly terms of abuse. The Tories meanwhile eagerly seized on his supposed 'obsession' with the doctrinaire idea of self-determination. It must be admitted, too, that Wilson gave some handle to his critics because of his rigid and haughty attitude to his American opponents. When he failed therefore, there were surprisingly few to mourn him. The Tory might be disturbed that the American-British guarantee to France promised at the Conference was not given, but he could not really blame his Republican brethren for objecting to the League of Nations. The Radical might be appalled by the failure of America to enter the League, but he could not but sympathise with his American friends who rejoiced that America had not soiled her hands by being a party to the Treaty of Versailles.

The fact of American isolationism therefore had to be faced. There was indeed much sympathy in this country with American isolationism. We had played at that game often enough ourselves. Radicals like Cobden and Tories like Salisbury had both in their way been isolationists. Whatever else we did not know about America, we knew the breadth of the Atlantic and could hardly blame the Americans for making theorems on that basis when we had done the same with only the Straits of Dover. We repeated to each other how very natural it was that America should want to keep out of things. There was another American idea that we shared, a distrust and dislike of Europe in general. We have to admit that we are Europeans, but we do not agree that we are continental. But the full intensity and complexity of isolationist feeling in America was not perfectly understood here. For one thing we did not fully understand how much the

American soldiers had disliked Europe, whether England or France. The country, the climate, the manners, the morals, had all displeased them, sometimes shocked them. They were glad to be out of it. They hoped never to come back.

On the face of it it may seem a paradox, but the Americans disliked the war in retrospect because it was for them so short and did not leave them war weary. This led to a certain frustration and encouraged the feeling that it had not been their war. It is true that their co-operation had been necessary for the Allies to win so complete a victory, probably to win any victory. The help of their Navy in the submarine war gave us a margin of safety at a very desperate moment, the addition of their battleships to the Grand Fleet reduced the German hopes of a successful naval action to vanishing point. In the second half of 1918 their large army in France made Foch's great offensive possible. In addition there are the economic and moral factors in American support which did so much to make our enemies despair of victory. There is good reason to believe that the Axis declaration of war on the United States in this war gave a severe shock to German morale. The thought that their rulers have again committed the final and fatal error of the last war must burn deep, and one may think of the Germans as being like Mahound in Chesterton's poem *Lepanto*:

For a noise is in the mountains, in the mountains and  
I know  
That voice that shook our palaces three hundred years  
ago.

None the less the war ended without any striking American victory comparable with Yorktown or Gettysburg. St. Mihiel and the Argonne were important actions, but only two amongst many of that year. Moreover the Americans had never felt themselves to be in danger as we and the French had done. Another injury to their pride was the fact that they had started in gigantic rhythms of mass production which had not become effective in the field by 1918 and they found themselves to a large extent fighting with French and British guns and aeroplanes. This was a serious matter to a people who believe themselves to be not only the biggest but the best engineers in the world. So they ended the war somewhat dissatisfied with themselves and therefore with their Allies.

It is sometimes said that we offended Americans by failing to appraise their efforts and dismissing their contribution as

unimportant. I do not think that there is much support for this contention, although the few writers and speakers who took this view would give offence out of all proportion to their importance.<sup>1</sup> On our side it was supposed by many that the Americans claimed to have won the war by themselves or at least to have taken the lion's share in the struggle. How much truth there is in this I do not know. There may be much high talk at gatherings of the American Legion and I have read accounts of speeches in which Americans take each other to task for vainglorious boasting. I can only say that in my own experience, whether with Americans whom I actually met in France and Belgium, or with many generations of American students at Oxford over fifteen years, I have never heard any American refer to his country's part in the war with anything but modesty. But their part in the war was on any sensible view great enough to entitle them to a dominating role at the Peace Conference. This they were given to a greater extent than many Englishmen and most Frenchmen cared for. But the Peace Conference failed. It did not fail to produce a Treaty; it did not fail to gain the signature of their great President, but it did fail to pass the Senate. Whatever the motives were that inspired the opposition to the Treaty, and many of them were factious and discreditable, the fact remained that from the American point of view the Treaty did fail. And as the intellectuals made the conception of the wicked Treaty of Versailles fashionable, all America came to believe and enjoyed believing that she had withdrawn from the peace because of its cruelties and errors and not because of its responsibilities, which were too great for a people in which the idea of international co-operation was only skin deep. But the result was that Americans came to think that for all their expenditure and sacrifice they had got nothing but evil. In the first years of this war a common American query to us was how we could guarantee that in the event of an Allied victory there would not be 'another Treaty of Versailles'. The answer to that was finally made by the Atlantic Charter, which makes it clear that, except that we this time promise no disarmament, the settlement must be very similar to Versailles. But I do not believe that that is the moral which is being drawn in America from the words of the Charter.

In America, as in this country, anti-militarism and pacifism

<sup>1</sup> Mr. E. H. Carr, *Conditions of Peace*, p. 172, declares that American participation 'perhaps hastened the victory'.

became extremely powerful, but in America it had a peculiarly national flavour. 'No more of that' meant to an Englishman no more war in general. To an American it tended to mean, no more wars for *us* in *Europe*. Disregarding the Pacific danger this meant no more wars at all, for Canada and Mexico were not to be thought of as antagonists. The English international pacifist takes on the whole a perfectly logical position. He believes that wars arise from general human wickedness. He is prepared to take the best possible view of his presumptive enemy and the worst possible view of his own country. The American isolationist-pacifist, as I understand it, is not like that. He can mingle with his pacifism a great deal of patriotism, for he believes that it is his country's great mission to abstain from wars and set an example of peace. National pride is a thing which I believe the English pacifist does throw away, and from his point of view most rightly. But the American pacifist mingles his pacifism with pride in his nation.

Americans commonly say that they left Europe in order to escape from war. This is cant, of course, but it is natural, one might almost say healthy, cant. Every nation has this cant, as when Scotsmen think themselves more thrifty, more austere and more logical than others;<sup>1</sup> as when Englishmen pride themselves on their fair-mindedness or the Irish on their wit and good manners. We must all have some subject for self-congratulation. Some Americans did go there to seek peace, Quakers, Moravian Brethren and the like. The Americans usually give as the motives for their emigrating such objects as religious liberty, political liberty, economic opportunity, freedom from a cruel despotic penal system. The Europeans from whom they parted probably summed the matter up more briefly in the four words, heresy, sedition, poverty or crime. Nor did the Americans who went seeking peace find it after all. Starting from the year 1763, when the original English speaking people of America were left free of the French danger, they had many wars, not counting the continual Indian wars. Between that year and the present the Americans have been at peace during 153 years. Prussia, the most military state in Europe, has been at peace during 155 years. Moreover, two of the American wars were civil wars, the war of the Revolution against King George III and the war of Secession, 1861-5. Outsiders have sometimes

<sup>1</sup> This is not a new idea. Erasmus, in his *Praise of Folly* published in 1509, tells us that the Scots pride themselves on 'their skill in logical subtleties'.

considered these to be unnecessary wars. At any rate a nation truly peace-loving should have avoided them. Nor were they swift or bloodless ; the civil war of Secession took the lives of one out of every thirty American males. If tributes for peacefulness are to be given out among nations of European stock, there is only one prize-winner, Sweden, which has been continually at peace at home and abroad for 128 years.

The Englishman, therefore is not likely to be much impressed with the American's claim to be by nature a man of peace. We may be ignorant of American history, but not so ignorant. This however is beside the point. In politics it is not the facts of history that are decisive so much as what people think the facts to be. The Americans after the last war did think that they had not merely a right but a duty to remain at peace. They kept out of the League of Nations because they feared it might have entangled them in a war. They were right about this. It probably would have entangled them in a dispute in which some blood might have been shed for a few days or weeks. But they sought a complete immunity ; they played for high stakes and, like many people who play for high stakes, they lost.

Englishmen, while sympathizing with many elements of American isolationism and not understanding others, bore their disappointment philosophically and settled down to the conditions set for them. One matter remained to embitter our relations. This was the question of war debts. During the nineteen-thirties we were told continually that the Americans felt very bitter about the failure of the European countries to pay their debts. It was necessary, we were told, to appreciate this. I think on the whole that we did appreciate it, that is, we accepted it as a fact and as a great debt-collecting country we had some sympathy with the broad general idea that debts should be paid. But we remembered two facts, firstly that we had paid them according to the settlement of 1923 and kept up payment for ten years, and secondly that they were not commercial debts. The mentality of the two countries was so very different. A protectionist country facing the problem of war debts, in the capacity of a creditor for the first time, had to deal with a free trade country which had been subsidizing allies in war for centuries, as Elizabeth aided the Dutch, as William and Anne subsidized the Austrians, Prussians and others, as British governments kept on paying subsidies throughout the wars of the eighteenth century, the wars with

Napoleon and the war of 1914-18. Sometimes these were subsidies, sometimes they were loans. In any case, very little was repaid or expected to be repaid. Moreover, with the best will in the world we could not pay a debt to America over the Hawley-Smoot tariff. In all honesty Englishmen could not think that the Americans were being either generous or sensible. Our reply was to take a leaf from the Americans' book. We stopped payments of the debts and adopted a protective tariff. Our protectionist policy may have been a great error, but at least we had stood out for free trade longer than any other great power. The debt question therefore had to go on, with reproaches on the American side and usually silence on our side. When Roosevelt made his great gesture of Lease and Lend he made it clear that the old American policy on debts was bankrupt. We who know how strongly his countrymen had felt about the debt question can fully appreciate not only his wisdom but his courage.

But of all inter-allied relationships the most crucial and the most difficult were the relations between England and France. In any case, they would have been important, but when America withdrew from the European sphere, Anglo-French co-operation formed the cornerstone of the peace of Europe, whether their governments were attempting to work the League system or to keep the peace without it. They had between them the preponderance of military force on land, air and sea, and the succession states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, Rumania, with their combined population of some seventy-five millions, were useful allies. But it was not long before France had become unpopular in this country. It began as we have seen with the Radicals, who distrusted her for being suspicious, revengeful, nationalistic, militarist. This feeling rose to a great height during the occupation of the Ruhr, when the conduct of the French did call for serious reproof. Quite apart from the merits of the question, it was poor psychology on Poincaré's part to take this step. Even if we admit, what is by no means certain, that the bitterness it caused in Germany did not matter because Germany was at heart irreconcilable, it lost France vital support in this country. The Radicals in particular objected to the French alliances with the countries of Central Europe because they held that the days of alliances had passed and that the alliances had a military element. However, the views of the Radicals do not matter so much, for in the twenty

years between the two wars they were only in office for three. The Conservative attitude was the most important.

Tory opinion, as we have seen, was at first strongly pro-French, and was fiercely resentful of the first attacks on the Treaty. But it altered rapidly and, for reasons that we have examined, turned against the Treaty. To turn against the Treaty was to turn against France. Whatever we in our strange mood of self-righteousness and intellectual superiority thought about the Treaty, it was precious to France. It was not, indeed, the Treaty that she would have made. It was an Anglo-Saxon peace. The doctrine of self-determination was too rigidly applied in many cases and the French had to fight hard for some concessions to be made to military needs. Annexation of German soil was ruled out and the disarmament of Germany was muddled up with projects of general disarmament which the French resented. The French accepted the League of Nations philosophically as the kind of thing which Anglo-Saxons, and perhaps some Jews and Radical-Socialists, liked. They were much more impressed by the Anglo-American guarantee which accompanied the Treaty, but when that failed, then the League was all that they had to fall back on. The French wanted two things out of the peace. They wanted the cost of the repairing of their devastated regions to fall on the Germans and not on themselves, and they wanted security. These were reasonable requests, and Englishmen for a time at any rate admitted that they were reasonable. On the reparations question the French errors took the form of an insistence on having monetary payments and a refusal to understand that there were strict limits to monetary payments if the German economic and political system was to survive. Because they waited for reparations to fill their coffers, the French would not tax themselves enough, and that brought about an inflation with all the disturbance and discontent that inflation brings. In the end the devastated areas were rebuilt. Professor Brogan has pointed out that Englishmen who professed such admiration for the constructive work of the Nazis and Fascists forgot that France carried out a great reconstruction of her own.<sup>1</sup> Because it was replacement and because it was done in accordance with

<sup>1</sup> D. W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France*, p. 599. 'The reconstruction of the devastated areas was the greatest economic achievement of post-war Europe. It involved far greater difficulties than did better-advertized programmes in more fortunate lands like Italy and Germany. It was carried out, too, in specially difficult conditions.'

the wishes of the local inhabitants and did not present a showy and imposing façade, it was little thought of. While reparations was under discussion the relation of the British and French governments was almost like that of an impatient teacher of economics with an obtuse and wilful pupil. In the end reparations were scaled down and abandoned. After all, it was only an economic problem and not a fundamental problem of politics. But it caused deep irritation on both sides and affected the root problem, that of security.

We have seen how Conservative opinion during this period was in many ways confused. It was hesitating and tentative and it lacked a doctrine. With regard to France, however, there were many good reasons why Englishmen should have become impatient. Civil servants, military officers and others who had to work on commissions with the French, reported a harsh and unyielding attitude. The Allied victory had left the French for a time in a very secure position and they were out to make the most of it. The consent of their Government was usually necessary for action, since these commissions were international and not the organs of a federal government. Very possibly the French officials were harder in their dealing than they would have been in private negotiations, because they were bound by instructions from above which would give them little room to make concessions. Anglo-Saxon sentimentalism and confusion of thought are also things which they are bred to guard against. None the less, the cumulative impression made on educated and influential Englishmen was serious, and it began to be said in Whitehall and in the clubs that the French were 'impossible'.

Every man is free to define the point at which another man becomes impossible. Englishmen, however, do pride themselves on being fair-minded, and it should be worth while making an effort to see in what respects the French found us to be impossible. The French wanted security. They had accepted the Treaty, and if the Treaty had been carried out they would have remained safe. In population and wealth France was not strong enough to conquer Europe, and she did not desire to do so. But she was strong enough with moderate assistance to keep Europe, west of Russia, secure. She did not want military adventures, she wanted to be at peace. The social and political question in France was acute enough to keep her governments out of adventures. Communism was a much greater danger there than here, but while the Third Republic survived there was no danger

of France seeking a war to decoy the masses from revolt. Everyone knew that that would be the one way to provoke a revolt. It is despotic governments that need to use that kind of outlet, and before they can use it they require an immense organization of political and intellectual repression. French officials and officers of the Right and Centre could not share any of the ideas of English Radicals. The accusations of militarism hurled against them across the Channel were meaningless and foolish to them and of immediate importance only because they were picked up by the French Socialists and used for their party purposes. But the French official classes did think they were entitled to find some common sense in English Conservatives, who were also being ludicrously accused of militarism by their Radical enemies. They knew that peace was in the long run preserved by opposing force with force. But the French found that English Conservatives had feet of clay. They professed themselves to be realists, but they would not take any interest in the Little Entente of Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia and Rumania, a combination almost as strong as the old Austrian Empire. They were indifferent to Poland, but here was another ally with which Germany could be restrained. What kind of realism was this ? An Englishman might talk of the danger of keeping down a great nation like the Germans. What did he want then ? To raise up a great nation like the Germans ? Had that not already happened with terrible consequences in 1914 ? Did the English never learn anything or remember anything ? The English were talking about the League of Nations ; it was their invention, theirs and the Americans. Very well then, let it be made of use ; if it was to be the safeguard against war, prepare it, organize it, arm it. But this was just what the English were unwilling to do. It was a ' rigid, over-logical policy '. What did they want then, an evasive illogical policy ? It would almost seem so. The project of organizing the League therefore was abandoned and we entered on the era of Locarno. It was not from the French point of view a very satisfactory treaty. The British confined their interest to Western Europe and the Rhine. To guarantee the Rhine frontier and to leave the valley of the Vistula and the plains of Bohemia with all their wealth open to Germany did not seem very realistic. But it was better than nothing, and the Treaty was not so foolish as it seemed, for it provided that the Rhineland was to be demilitarized and thus left open to French attack if Germany

struck eastward. It could hardly have been supposed in 1925 that the German Army would be allowed to build a West Wall undisturbed. Yet Locarno proved to be the most broken of reeds. It is stated that the French could have easily driven the Germans out in 1936 when they entered the Rhineland, but they were entitled to our support. We talk much in England of the sanctity of treaties, but our view is somewhat one-sided. We are shocked when a government signs a treaty binding it not to do something and then breaks the treaty by doing it. We are not shocked when we bind ourselves to do something and then refuse to do it. But those who are affected by our refusal to act do not see the force of this distinction.

It can be said with truth that the public feeling in England was against acting when Hitler invaded the Rhineland. British common sense recoiled at the idea of stopping a man invading his own country. But it had not recoiled when we first took on the obligation to stop the Germans invading their own country. It may be said that the Government entirely lacked popular support over the Rhineland question. If this was so it might have done its duty under the Constitution and resigned. It might on the other hand have prepared the public mind for the event. It was no secret that Hitler was likely to take advantage of the Abyssinian question. A lead from the Government informing us of our duties under the Treaty of Locarno, a warning that the consequences of failing in these duties would be the contempt of France, and the final success of German rearmament, would have had its effect and at least separated those who were willing from those who were not willing to oppose Fascism. We are always being told that the public was listless, frightened, confused. This may be true, but it raises the question under what leaders? Who are the ministers who presided over this listless, frightened and confused people? Are they straining themselves to animate, to inspire and convert them? If they are not, then they are sharing in the general debility. A leader may have to lose office because the public will not support him; but if he stays in office then he has become an accomplice in the people's errors.

After the occupation of the Rhineland the British lost their last moral claim to the support of France. Locarno represented a miserable whittling down of the great structure of Versailles and to some extent an evasion of the Covenant of the League. From the French point of view it was little enough to ask.

When we failed to give them this minimum of support there was no longer any moral bond between us, only a bond of interest. And the interest of France was not inevitably to be our ally. If Germany was to be allowed to be the predominant partner in Europe she might serve as a confederate of France just as well as England. There was something a little more positive about Germany. In the realm of big business there were many links between France and Germany, for during the nineteen-twenties French industrialists had risen above that narrow economic nationalism, so much deplored by international Radicals, and had come to working arrangements. Only the deep dislike of large classes in France for Nazism and all that it meant kept France still willing to deal with us. In 1939 she allowed us to push her into war. It was on her part a heroic act, but an act of despair. Even we in this country had a feeling that there was something very foolish in having to fight Germany again and fight her at such a disadvantage. How much more must the French have felt this. One by one every safeguard of the Peace Treaty had been thrown away. The countries which should have been her allies had been conquered or were waiting helplessly. At the last moment England had gone proud and militant and had demanded war and France had to go with her. She had been denounced for years by Englishmen and Americans, lectured for her narrow nationalism, her militarism, her sinister support of countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland. She had been burdened with the Covenant of the League and sharply criticized when she suggested that it be taken seriously. She had only wanted security from war. The English had said that the Treaty should be revised and frontiers changed to Germany's advantage. The French knew all the difficulties of this, but there was only one thing she would accept in exchange for imposing such a sacrifice on her Allies, she wanted security. Every lecture and lesson read to the French by the Anglo-Saxons provoked the same request for some guarantee of security. It was the one thing we had to offer and the one thing we would never give. Sometimes the request was treated as damning evidence of France's incurably militant disposition, and in 1940 many of those who had thought this were forward in bewailing the decline of French martial spirit and cursing the French of to-day for not being the men their fathers were, calling on the spirit of Foch to exorcise the demon of defeatism in Pétain. Who knows whether, if Foch had been able to live through all

the thwarting and insulting that France received from her Anglo-Saxon friends, he might not have learned to capitulate with something of the dignity he had shown in victory.

The attitude of the Vichy Government to this country is a legitimate cause for distress, but not for surprise. The men of Vichy and those who supported them were as much entitled to 'understanding' as were Mussolini and Hitler in their early days when they appealed to open-minded people abroad not to judge them too rashly. Although the operation is psychologically more difficult, a defeated ally should be given at least as much sympathy as a defeated enemy. To say this does not in any way diminish the gratitude and admiration we should feel to General de Gaulle and to the Fighting French. Their extraordinary courage and confidence is not diminished but enhanced by reflecting that those who could not bring themselves to so self-sacrificing a course are probably as good men as most of us are. The Gospels admonish us when asked by our brother to go with him a mile to go with him twain. But we are not told to expect it to be a common experience to find ourselves accorded such treatment. The extra portion of faith and grace that General de Gaulle and his comrades received is best regarded, in theological phraseology, as an uncovenanted mercy.

There is one mental exercise that both Englishmen and Americans should engage in before too rashly condemning the French. We should imagine, and it ought not to be very difficult, that in 1940 the Battle of Britain was not won but lost. We should imagine the country overrun by German panzer forces, our ill-armed regulars and Home Guards scattered and compelled to surrender. We should suppose that while some escaped to Canada perhaps to carry on the fight, the public morale collapsed and a Government was formed to negotiate a surrender as being a lesser evil than complete occupation and a war of extermination. It would be highly libellous to mention the names of any living person in this connection, so I will suppose a fictitious Pétain, say, a veteran naval hero of the last war, Admiral Broadside. He would sign an armistice giving the Germans occupation of England from the Wash to the Severn and Scotland from Ayr, northwards. This Government would not sit in London, but would set itself up at Harrogate. He would appeal for loyalty and discipline in the hour of disaster. He would remind us of our weakness, our reluctance

to arm, our unwillingness to train, of the fact that we were left without allies. He would tell us that if we had not been invaded we should in any case have starved in a few months' time. These reproaches we should no doubt have taken to heart, but we should also have insisted that someone had let us down. There would have been much bitterness against the French, but also some fellow-feeling. Our wrath would undoubtedly have been turned against America. We would have remembered her rejection of the Peace Treaty, her refusal to co-operate with us in the enforcement of peace, her conduct over the war debts. We should have reminded ourselves of the American slogans about never lending money to Europe, since it would only be spent on arms, and how these slogans had scarcely died away in our ears before we were receiving calls to action, to strike the Nazi tyrant down, to quit ourselves like men. We should have remembered how, mixed with these indignant commands to fight, were heard the cries of the isolationists and the ululations of fifty million American women crying that their sons, born or unborn, were never to be sent abroad to die in other peoples' wars. It would not require the skilled propaganda of the Nazi-controlled radio of London and Edinburgh and the milder tones of the 'free' radio of Manchester to produce a violent outburst of anti-American feeling which would be skilfully directed to the final step of handing over the British Fleet.

In such circumstances we might have taken some consolation in becoming in a new sense 'good Europeans'. We should have restored our self-respect by remembering that at least our Fleet had held the seas until the Channel was crossed, that we had sent nine divisions to France, that we set out to defend Egypt against hopeless odds, while America had only repealed the Neutrality Act. Our feelings towards Roosevelt would have quickly changed. He would now be the war-monger who had pushed two nations into a war which he had no thought of waging himself. No counter-propaganda from America would reach us, for it would be a capital offence to possess a short-wave wireless set. New York would thunder against the 'Government of Harrogate' in vain, and if jokes about the waters of appeasement did reach us, they would have seemed to be jokes more against America than against ourselves. When Hitler's patience with America was finally lost, and it would not be long before that happened, the whole of Europe would be drilled to a new conception of world politics, 'the Resumption of

America'. Europe's unworthy son would be called to his final account.

The French case against England is not unlike the English case against America. Our position is worse in that we did enter into engagements with France which we did not fulfil. America at least made her position clear when she renounced the Treaty, but she did not renounce interest and concern in Europe. Americans did not fail, on the balance, to become outspoken partisans of the anti-Nazi cause, free in exhortation, barren in military support. Both Englishmen and Americans have a right to judge the French, just as much right and no more than the French have to judge us. Many harsh judgements are no doubt to be made on the French politicians, on the military leaders and on the people. History may yet unravel it all and come to some true and just conclusion. In the meantime, remembering all that France has suffered in this war and has still to suffer, Englishmen should include among the many emotions with which they regard her, a sense of shame and of deep humility.

## Chapter Six

### PACIFISM AND DISARMAMENT

WHENEVER discussion takes place about the reasons for this present war, especially in Tory circles, the remark is usually made, 'It was all that pacifist nonsense.' This meant, broadly speaking, that the country, or at least a sufficient part of it, had been corrupted and misled by false doctrine and false sentiment. Now it would be idle to deny that there existed some phenomenon which might justifiably be called pacifist. But what exactly pacifism was and how many different forms of it there were is a complex question. On consulting my somewhat tattered copy of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, edition of 1911, I was surprised to find that the word pacifism did not occur. The Supplementary 'Addenda' of new words, dated September 1914, does however mention the word :

'Pacificism, pacifism, pacifist, pacifist, nn. (Adherent of) the doctrine that the abolition of war is both desirable and possible. (Pacific- ism, -ist; the -fism -fist, forms are barbarous but usual.)'<sup>1</sup>

The learned lexicographers would seem to be more concerned to tell us the scholarly and correct forms than to elaborate the possible meanings of the word. Another definition that I find is as follows. *Universal Dictionary* (edited Wyld) :

'Doctrine, theory, teaching of the necessity for universal or international peace and the abolition of war as a means of settling disputes; systematic opposition to militarism.'

While it is true that people who believe that the abolition of war is both desirable and possible may properly be described as pacifist, it is scarcely a complete definition. There are different ways of abolishing wars, and there may be people who believe that any war immediately foreseeable in the case of their own country can be avoided and who cannot go so far as to envisage the ending of war altogether as a human activity. Such persons may not be pacifists according to the dictionary definition, but it is certain that they will be called so by many of their fellow-citizens. There is also the interesting question of whether persons who would never support an international

<sup>1</sup> The Third Edition (1934) makes no addition to this definition.

war but who would take part in a class war involving violent revolution should be styled pacifist or not. Is a man who will refuse to man a frontier fort but who would gladly man a street barricade a pacifist or not? We know that there have been such persons.

If the broad and loose definition of the word pacifist is to be accepted, then the British Government was committed by the acts and words of her statesmen to a pacifist policy. The preamble to Part I of the Treaty of Versailles makes this clear:

#### 'THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES

In order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security

by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,

by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,

by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and

by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another,

Agree to the Covenant of the League of Nations.'

Now this does not say that men will never fight, but it does quite clearly aim at eliminating war between the nations signing the Covenant, and they came to comprise the great majority of states, covered the larger part of the earth's surface and contained the greater number of the earth's inhabitants. Under the provisions of the Covenant its members were bound to respect each other's territories, and if a member broke this obligation it was to be restrained by the common action of the other members. Statesmen in all parties in this country subscribed to this conception in emphatic and solemn language. Yet they were not all held to be pacifist. As a common-sense test we need only look at the names of those who signed the Treaty. Here are the British signatures:

D. Lloyd George, A. Bonar Law, (Lord) Milner, Arthur James Balfour, George N. Barnes. Mr. Lloyd George had been called a pacifist in 1900 when he opposed the Boer War and was nearly lynched by the mob in Birmingham. Mr. Barnes was a member of the Labour Party, and if you care to take the view that they were all pacifists you can, but he was the Labour Member in the War Cabinet. But no one ever called Lord Milner a pacifist, nor Mr. Balfour, nor Mr. Bonar Law. The Conservative Party

was never presented to the country as the pacifist party. Indeed, it was the Conservatives who were accustomed to denounce their enemies as pacifists. What did this mean? Did it mean merely that the Radicals were interested in preserving peace, in averting war? Perhaps; but were the Conservatives not interested in preserving peace and were they anxious to provoke war? No Conservative would admit this for a moment and nothing irritated them more than a certain kind of wild radical talk which presented them as militarist-aristocrats, longing for the excitements of war, or sinister armaments' manufacturers hoping for war profits. Indeed, in the Abyssinian crisis and in the Munich crisis such Radicals observed first with astonishment and then with indignation that there were no people in the country who wanted war less than the Conservatives. The Radicals had to admit themselves to have been wrong. They had to talk of secret Fascist sympathies and to pick up the old slogans about international financiers and their wicked machinations that Colonel Lowther and Page-Croft had employed in 1919. (In the circumstances of 1938 they had to drop the word 'Jewish'.)

However, when the Conservatives railed against their political opponents as pacifists, they must have meant something. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. A thing so much talked about must have existed in some form or other. The question is in what form, or, to be more accurate, in what forms? We have already noticed how the Radical and what may be called the pro-League parties were divided into those who were for opposing force with force (only they wanted collective force), and those who were for avoiding war by non-resistance, by refusing to fight. Both sides can be ranked as pacifist under our original dictionary definition. I suggest that the word pacifist is best employed to denote the class of non-resisters. This is not to say that Lord Cecil and his 'sanctionist' party were not more entitled to the word pacifist than Conservatives such as Lord Baldwin, Mr. Amery, Lord Hailsham and others. They were. They were statesmen who in the public mind were especially associated with the belief in the desirability and possibility of eliminating war by the specific method of the League Covenant. The others were formally committed to such a policy, but did not take it very seriously.

There is no excuse for anyone who has lived through the past twenty years, whether dictionary makers or others, for failing

to observe that the word pacifist had an extreme or narrower meaning as opposed to its general sense. The notion of non-resistance either as a means of preventing war or as rule of personal conduct was well enough known. Its prophets did not hide their light under a bushel. There were two schools of thought amongst the non-resisters.<sup>1</sup> There was the intellectualist school and the religious school. Men and women of many different branches of the Christian Church could combine in professing pacifism. Some Anglican clergy, like the late Mr. Dick Sheppard, advocated the method of stopping war by a mass refusal to fight. I have heard Anglican clergy confess with pain that the support given to pacifism by the pastors of the Church has brought it into great and just discredit. I think this is somewhat unfair. They were never a very large number, and I doubt if any parliamentary candidate fighting a constituency on a pacifist programme ever thought of the vicarages and rectories as bastions of his cause, any more than the public houses. I have heard also of ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland who held and proclaimed pacifist views, a thing which shocks me even more than the conduct of the Anglicans, as implying not only religious but national apostasy, for if there is any nation in the world where the word 'Covenant' should suggest also the word 'sword' it is Scotland. The doctrine of the principal, organized and learned divisions of the Christian Church has in fact always been quite clear on the right of the civil magistrate to use force and the right of the individual to defend himself.

There is, however, in England a powerful, wealthy and organized body which does hold the doctrine of non-resistance in the fullest sense and this is the Society of Friends, or Quakers. About the turn of the last century the Friends, who had previously been a body keeping itself aloof from the world, engaging little in politics (John Bright was a notable exception), came out into the public arena. The political and philanthropic work of the late Mr. George Cadbury was the most famous example,

<sup>1</sup> My colleague, Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, has suggested that there is an important connection between the word pacifist and the term passive-resistance. It is partly a mere suggestion of sound, as both words begin with the same syllable, however different they may be etymologically. There is also the historical fact that passive resistance has been used as a method of opposing governments armed with force, as for instance the 'passive resisters' who refused to pay rates under the Balfour Education Bill of 1902 and the 'passive resistance' to which Mr. Gandhi from time to time summons his followers in India.

although the work of the Rowntrees in social observation and reform was also valuable. This emergence of the Quakers was an important event in English history. While the Quakers remained 'a peculiar people' living in and by themselves, their effect on political events was not very great. Quaker iron-masters might refuse to cast cannon in the eighteenth century. There were always other ironmasters who did cast cannon. Quakers in one valley of Pennsylvania might protest against mixing money with blood when asked to pay taxes, while in another valley white men were being scalped by Red Indians. But when the Quaker influence began to spread, however thinly, through the whole of the body politic, its effects were more serious. The Quakers were never numerous. (*Whitaker's Almanack* gives the figure of 30,000 or 0·08 of the population of England, as compared, for example, with 270,000 or 0·72 for the Jews. No figures are given for Quakers in Wales and Scotland.) But they had means and influence out of proportion to their numbers and they were animated by a marvellous zeal for the causes in which they believed themselves to be driven by the light. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the objection to intermarriage between Quakers and others was breaking down, and thus the influence of their ideas spread more widely. We often hear people explain their attitude by referring to their Quaker ancestry, and it is a psychological fact that men are most impressed by an unusual element in their ancestry, Highland, Huguenot, Quaker or what you will.

Wherever the Quaker sentiment made itself felt there was bred a horror of war and a tendency to accept any theory, policy or expedient which might seem to make war impossible. After the close of the last war such ideas had a natural appeal. The Quakers had been remembered as the one group of people who had been unalterably opposed to any war, who had refused to have lot or part in war. During the war they had been maligned as 'conchies', denounced as pro-Huns. As always happens, such abuse brings its revenge on those who hurl it, and its reward to those who endured it. In politics there is very little mud that cannot in time be fashioned into a martyr's crown. People remembered, too, that the Friends had borne a good war record in ambulance work and other activities. When the war was over, a vast field was opened up for Quaker charity in Central Europe, in allied countries and, better still, in enemy countries. The Friends' relief funds and still more the hard ungrudging

work often performed by men and women who had all the means for an easy and comfortable life impressed people deeply at home as well as abroad. Their work in Vienna was especially valuable, and I have even met a Vienna woman who said to me, 'In Vienna we are Catholics, but in England, of course, you are all Quakers.' Thus their light shone before men and their good works were seen by all. That they were inspired by religious feeling was no obstacle to the atheistic Radicals who admired them so greatly, and it is fair to say that Quaker thought is so little burdened with systematic theology and their worship so little impeded by elaborate ritual that they were admirably void of offence in this unclerical age.<sup>1</sup>

All this fine philanthropy however does not settle the question of whether their views are right. Is it right to oppose an invading army with force? Can peace be preserved in this way? Is the famous text of the Gospel, 'Resist not evil', a maxim of universal application for Christians? Should England have endured Nazi invasion as Denmark did? Was the declaration of war on Poland a sin? Was the Battle of Britain a crime? The pacifist pure and proper must hold that our resistance was wrong. Just as it would have been better to bow to the will of the Kaiser, so it would have been better to bow to the will of Hitler. Now this is the most fundamental question in the whole of politics. No amount of good works can make it right if in truth it is wrong. If the Quaker-pacifist school had controlled this country in the period between the wars there would have been no ships, guns, or aeroplanes with which to resist the Nazis. Again in this war the Quakers have had the legal privilege of exemption from military service; again they have shown themselves to be zealous workers, whether fighting fire bombs in London hospitals or manning ambulances in Chungking. But because we tolerate them and admire them that is not to say that we must believe them. When one considers how much they

<sup>1</sup> In a lecture on the Reformation once, I distinguished between 'grand' Protestantism, meaning the three great branches, the Reformed or Calvinist, the Evangelical or Lutheran, and the Anglican, as opposed to 'petty' Protestantism, meaning the numerous English and American sects with no roots in the Reformation proper. I was speaking purely in a technical sense. After the lecture I was confronted by a Canadian pupil who wanted to know whether I would include the Quakers under petty. I replied, 'Most certainly.' 'I never thought to hear the word petty applied to the Quakers,' he observed solemnly. I may add that he was a strong radical in his views, and a consistent free-thinker. Once in company with myself and some fellow countrymen, he was heard to burst out with a groan of disgust, 'I despair of ever meeting a Scotsman who does not believe in God.'

have done to make Englishmen ashamed to think of the arts of defence, how hopelessly they prejudiced the work of those who tried to make collective security a convincing and practical policy, one is tempted to exclaim, 'Who will deliver us from the errors of this insidious sect?'

The intellectual Radical-pacifists could not base their advocacy of non-resistance on religious grounds, for they had none. They had to argue it on a rational basis. Two of the most eminent of them, Bertrand Russell and Mr. Joad, have since recanted their beliefs. But their influence was once very powerful. To a generation of young people shocked by the facts of the last war, and those who were not in it were more deeply shocked than those who were, demonstrations that war did not pay, defeated its own ends, wrought nothing but evil, were a powerful revelation. What they dreaded was that there would be a war in which they would have to fight. The pacifists told them that if they did not fight there would be no war. Coming from men like Bertrand Russell, pre-eminent for great qualities of mind, this was indeed a comfortable doctrine. If by refusing to fight you can save not only your own skin but also civilization, the temptation to believe becomes very strong. There was also the Socialist version, that wars were made only by certain classes, the governing or capitalist class; so refusing to fight in this way became an extension of the Socialist policy of refusing to work, in fact the general strike.

Such views are supposed to have been particularly strong amongst university students. In the Universities, it is true, they had many supporters, and from the Universities they passed to the schools through schoolmaster graduates. I do not believe that there was ever a majority of pacifists amongst the students or anything like a majority. As usually happens, when universities are in question, it was the University of Oxford which leaped into public notice. In February 1933 the Oxford Union Debating Society discussed a resolution which asked the house to refuse in any circumstances to fight for King and Country. The sensation created when this resolution was passed was tremendous. It received world-wide publicity, and in this country those organs of the Press which were most forward in emphasizing its deplorable effects lost no opportunity of keeping the matter before the public eye. Throughout England people, especially elderly people, were thoroughly shocked. Englishmen who were in India at the time have told

me of the dismay they felt when they heard of it. When I was visiting American universities in the autumn of 1941 I was told that the students would expect me to speak about it, for they were very badly disillusioned. I was never able to gather why they were so disillusioned, whether they were disappointed because so powerful a pronouncement by a students' debating society had failed to stay the hands of dictators, or because the Oxford students in 1939 joined the armed forces as their fathers and elder brothers had done before them. The incident, however, has received so much notice that, as an officer of the University, a College tutor and a member and one-time debater in the Union Society, I feel I cannot pass it over without comment.

It must frankly be admitted that the Society was most ill-advised to adopt such a motion. They know that Oxford student politics receive a great deal of publicity, and they do very little to discourage it. It was, at the least, very poor political psychology, and the Union has suffered in reputation as a result. But there are some points which must be made. By tradition the resolutions to be debated are usually cast in a very challenging form, extreme assertions being favoured. They are supposed to be only the pegs for a debate, for the Society is a club and its debates are a school of rhetoric and nothing more. Men of every party are members and compete for the office of President. The voting is often determined, not by the fundamental convictions of the members, but by their verdict as to who was the best speaker. Usually less than half the undergraduates in residence are members of the Society and some of those who are members never attend the debates and join it only for the Library and the Club rooms. On this occasion there was what is considered a large house, and 275 voted for the motion and 153 against. It therefore did not in any way represent Oxford undergraduate opinion as a whole. We have already noticed that the University constituency, although continually reinforced by young graduates, has been predominantly Conservative. It should also be noted that at such a debate there are many Indians, who naturally have no strong feeling about our King and Country, and also Americans, who about that time tended to lean towards pacifist ideas. But the important thing to notice is that the resolution does not say that we will never fight, but rather that we will never fight for King and Country. After all, these young men were citizens of a State that had set itself on a policy of outlawing war. By the

Kellogg Pact it had renounced war as a means of national policy. Indeed, it would appear that we could not then fight for King and Country, since we had made it impossible to do so without violating international law which we ourselves had helped to make. It by no means follows that everyone who voted for the resolution was a pacifist in the sense of a non-resister. I am well aware that to many this will appear a pitiful quibble. But those who say so, show themselves to be ignorant of the ideas of intelligent young men in the post-war period.

It is true that the chief speaker for the motion was Mr. C. E. M. Joad, who was (then) a pacifist in the full sense. It is true that many who voted with him may have shared his extreme views. But no one who knew the politically-minded students of the time can fail to understand that many of them did believe that it might be Britain's duty to fight for the preservation of a system of peace in accordance with the Covenant. They were much better acquainted than their elders with Article 16 of the Covenant. The phrase fighting for King and Country was used as a jingle for a war of national policy and to many it did not exclude a war for collective security. That such ideas were common then and later I know from my own experience. In September 1939 two students, men of light and leading in their college and with a good academic record, came to say good-bye to me before leaving to join their units. Each of them separately observed that if they had to vote on the notorious Union resolution at that moment, they would vote for it. One of them declared : ' I am not going to fight for King and Country, and you will notice that no one, not Chamberlain, not Halifax, has asked us to.' It is true enough. No one can study the propaganda of this war without noticing its wide international note. Broad general ends are spoken of, freedoms, ways of life and so on. What we are fighting against is carefully described ; what we are fighting for is expressed in more general terms, the interests of one nation alone, the honour of one nation alone does not seem to be sufficient. If there is one thing that is clear from all the pronouncements that have been made about the world after an Allied victory, it is that the security of single states is to depend on some kind of co-operative action by many states. I will not prejudice such an excellent conception by calling it collective security.

At the time of the debate such a defence of it was dismissed as trifling by those who were shocked by the motion. ' What

is wrong with the younger generation ? ' was the general query. It may be admitted that much was wrong with them. But no generation makes itself. We may ask what the elders were about who had the leadership of youth. The fact is that young people, far from being cynical by nature, are ingenuous and enthusiastic. They are easily impressed by calls to good thought and good deeds. They will often believe what they are told. Often they are priggish, but those who bring them up must not complain of that. The young from infancy are deluged with maxims of virtue, and in their adolescence are called to high ideals by teachers and preachers, statesmen and dignitaries. We must not complain if they sometimes take our instruction too seriously and give a greater value and a more concrete meaning to statements which we make with mental reservations. They had heard about the war and how evil it had been. They knew that our conduct in international affairs was now supposed to be regulated by a system of diplomatic action that was new in European history, and that defence against aggression was not the task or duty of any single nation. They had taken these things seriously. Even in 1933, after so many disappointments, so much refusal of leadership, they were still taking such things seriously. That is the way of youth. After the last war they were told, and it was becoming statistically true, that they were very precious to the country, that their voice must be heard, that they must make their ideals flourish. In this war the same dangerous notions are being proclaimed again. It may be wise to say all this ; I am not sure. The education of youth is a dangerous activity. You must be prepared to be scorned and laughed at ; you must be prepared to be ignored and despised ; you must be prepared also to be believed, and it is that which will make the greatest demands upon your patience. If I have to indict anyone over the Union motion, then I indict the older generation for their elementary failure to understand what was going on in the minds of younger men, for their rashness and ignorance in denouncing them as decadent, rotten and misguided, for their folly in supposing that the young could share their own weary cynicism about the far-reaching principles and solemn engagements to which our statesmen had bound us.

It will be said, however, that the motion was a pacifist motion in the pure and bad sense, that the men I have spoken of, who thought of it as leaving them with a duty to fight for the League, were only a small handful. I do not agree, but even

if it is true, it may be answered that those who were so shocked at pacifism should have tried to find out what exactly pacifism was and how powerful it was. There was only one way to do this, the way indicated in the last chapter. If the Government had said : arm, train, drill, prepare to fight if necessary for the old country, to hold what we have, to win what we can, it would certainly have fallen on deaf ears. It would have provoked a terrible explosion. But they might have said, there is one thing only which would bring us to use military force, and one situation in which we guarantee that we will use military force, and that is a breach of the international peace. We will prepare for that and for nothing else. Such a policy would, I believe, have had magical effects. It would have stated the problem in its true terms. There would, of course, have been a large residue of pure pacifism, but it could have been noted, marked and measured. It could have been contended with and fought. It would have confronted a logical and moral thesis that would have been understood and accepted by the majority of the nation. If Socialist local authorities tried to dissolve officers' training corps or refused their playgrounds for cadets, then the words and actions of their responsible leaders when Ministers of the Crown could have been quoted against them. It would not in every case have been effective. But the Socialist Party was not united on such issues and it contained men who would even have left the party if it had refused to co-operate in a truly international policy. In any case, the socialists were a minority of the nation. At the most favourable period, in 1929, they could only poll eight million out of twenty-one million votes. They were never the masters. But the Conservatives under their timid and flaccid leadership could never rise to such a policy. They could not even understand that there was such a policy to be accepted or refused.

With the question of pacifism goes the question of disarmament. We have seen that the only way out for our Governments in this matter was to arm on the basis of some calculation of what our duties as a member of the League required, or to leave the League and arm at whatever cost for the protection of our territories against the strongest possible combination of enemies. But the strangest thing about discussions on disarmament which go on to-day is that they usually consist of disagreements not as to what should have been done but as to what actually was done. Again and again one hears it stated, ' Oh, that's all

very well, but we had no arms. We had thrown them all away.' I cannot believe that I am peculiar in always hearing such statements made. I have read letters from men high in the government service in their time, in which it has been stated that we had practised unilateral disarmament, or in one case that when faced with Italy's action in 1935 we had nothing whatever with which to oppose her. These statements were made by serious men speaking seriously. What do they mean? Is it true that we ever disarmed? Once again I invoke the help of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*:

Disarm, v.t. & i. Deprive of weapons ; deprive of weapons (esp. in fencing, jerk foil etc. out of hand of) ; dismantle (city, ship), reduce, be reduced to peace footing (of army or navy), abandon or cut down military establishment, whence **DISARMAMENT** n. ; deprive of power to injure ; pacify hostility or suspicion of.

The first of these meanings, 'deprive of weapons', can be applied to Germany and the defeated enemy states, also the dismantling of forts and ships.<sup>1</sup> In this country we did reduce our forces to a peace footing. No one supposed that we should not do so. The establishment we had at the end of the war could not have been maintained. From that level we did cut down military establishment. How far we reduced it to a peace footing depends on what a reasonable peace footing was. By no stretch of imagination can it be said that we *abandoned* our military establishment. The Admiralty and the War Office still stood. Unlike the buildings of the old German General Staff they were not sold to be the headquarters of a Catholic Archbishop. The Air Ministry was housed and the Air Force won fame by winning the Schneider Trophy. Yet people will speak as if we did throw away our arms. I have known people who were surprised to hear that during nearly the whole of the twenty years' peace we possessed some of our chief naval units of this war, the *Nelson* and the *Rodney*, the *Hood*, the *Repulse* and the *Renown*. To talk as though we had thrown away our arms is the purest nonsense. It is a fact of some psychological and political significance. Why should otherwise sensible people say such things? It must, I suppose, be attributed to the endless outcry and agitation of the pacifists which made so much noise that it crazed men into thinking that what was demanded

<sup>1</sup> Even then the enemy States were not left without armies. But there was a much greater reduction, especially in fortifications, arsenals, etc. Military aircraft were forbidden.

had actually been accomplished. That may explain but hardly excuse it. Because a wild and foolish man or woman is shrieking at you, you do not need to refuse to believe the evidence of your senses. Did people think that the annual Navy Week was a fake or that the Army was capable only of staging the Aldershot Tattoo? The pacifist, aghast to find that many years after the war we were still spending £100,000,000 a year on armaments, did not think that he lived in a country that had done away with arms. The retired German officer contemplating his miniature fleet, his army of 100,000 men and his purely civil aviation did not think of Britain as a defenceless country.

The real controversy centres round the alleged cutting down of military expenditure. Here there were no pre-war standards to guide us. The German Navy lay at the bottom of the sea. The small force left to her was within Treaty limits and it was only with a great struggle that the Reichstag permitted the pocket battleships to be built. They were not in themselves a menace to us. With regard to the Army we returned to something like the dimensions of the pre-war Army available for use throughout the Empire. With our ally France predominant in Europe and her numerous allies to assist her, there was no need for a permanently organized expeditionary force. Our Air Force was a thing for which no pre-war comparisons existed. It was kept at high efficiency but was smaller than that of France.<sup>1</sup> It was of course more widely spread.

The Navy had been limited by the Washington Treaty of 1921 which established a ratio of 5.5.3 in capital ships and was therefore very favourable to the Anglo-Saxon powers. The London Naval Treaty of 1930 provided that Great Britain, U.S.A., Japan, France and Italy would not replace obsolescent ships during the period 1931 to 1936. It is of this Treaty that our naval men complain because it resulted in our starting the war with so many very old ships. Still, with our 15 battleships, our 51 cruisers, our 8 aircraft-carriers, our 134 destroyers, 52 submarines, 17 gun-boats and 27 minesweepers we were not entirely without defence in the year in which Hitler began to rebuild German armaments. Japan, France and America had more submarines than we had, and America more destroyers,

<sup>1</sup> The following figures are given in *Whitaker* for 1934. France, first-line aircraft, 1,700; second-line, 3,000. Britain, 953 and 1,434. Italy only second-line aircraft, 1,507. Japan had a first-line strength of 1,400. U.S.A. of 1,800. U.S.S.R., 750. Czechoslovakia, 546. German rearmament was then just beginning.

but not all in commission. But our naval experts not only complained of the age of our ships but of deficiency in number. Thus Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, distinguished both as a seaman and as a naval historian, has stated that 'a gravely erroneous estimate of the nation's needs was adopted in the Treaty of London. It was improperly assumed that cruiser strength was a relative matter and that equality with the number sufficing for another nation was sufficient for Great Britain and the Empire.'<sup>1</sup> Actually in 1934 we had 51 cruisers to Japan's 39, Italy's 24, America's 21, France's 19, and Germany's 8. This margin no doubt does not satisfy Admiral Richmond's demands of what was appropriate, and possibly he can prove that many of our cruisers were lighter than those of Japan or other nations. But all armaments have regard to some political situation. Certainly it was not enough if we were to have cruiser strength equal to any enemy in any of the seven seas. This would have required us always to have a much larger Navy than any of the other powers, since our territories were wider and the volume of our shipping greater. It would have meant denouncing the Washington Treaty of 1921 and building irrespective of the United States. The political consequences of this might well have been worse than losing a battle at sea. We assumed that some countries were friendly to us and would never be our enemies. The United States and France were two such countries, and the assumption has been justified. France went to war when we did, and not even at the lowest ebb of our fortunes did Japan attack us. She assumed that America would fight, and therefore her first act of war was against the American Navy at Pearl Harbour. Therefore, our situation was not so unfavourable as it might seem. Moreover, under the League Covenant we were entitled to assume the friendly disposition of nearly all states provided we did not figure as an aggressor. 'Realists' may dismiss the Covenant as moonshine, but we, who had so much to gain by taking it seriously, were forward in refusing to accept it as an instrument with any military possibilities. In 1930, when the London Treaty was signed, there were in fact two powers in the world with a programme of expansion and a philosophy of war, Japan and Italy. The failure to stop their first aggressions lay more in political and moral factors than in lack of arms.

Air armaments provide another problem. It is frequently

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Pamphlet No. 60, 'War at Sea To-day.'

said that after the last war we scrapped our Air Force. This is not merely an *obiter dictum* of the man in the street, it is affirmed in a State paper, a White Paper presented to Parliament on March 1st, 1935.<sup>1</sup> Here it is recited that, 'In the air we virtually disarmed ourselves in 1919.' The authors of this document are careful to use the word 'virtually', but, even then, although it is one of the most overworked words in the language, it seems to be badly strained in this connection. In the year 1919 the Air Estimates provided for the expenditure of sixty-six million pounds and a personnel of 31,000 men. In 1921 the estimates were for seventeen million pounds. By 1925 the figure was £15,513,000. After that the figure was stabilized in the region of seventeen millions, the highest being £18,100,000 under the Labour Government in 1931, falling back to seventeen millions under the National Government. It is difficult to see by what stretch of language this can be called disarming. It is true that the memorandum goes on, 'and subsequently from time to time postponed attainment of the minimum of air strength regarded as necessary to our security in the face of air-developments on the Continent. It is not that British Governments have neglected to keep themselves informed of the position. Every year the state of our armaments has been anxiously considered, and if risks have been run, they have been accepted deliberately in pursuit of the aim of permanent peace.'

This begins to make some sense of the first statement quoted. But we may ask what were the 'developments on the Continent' which threatened our security in the period 1923-33, the period before Hitler came to power? The one dangerous possibility was a war provoked by Italy in accordance with Mussolini's expressed intentions in speech and writing. He did not, however, risk this adventure until Germany's rearmament had created a new problem for France. Until then France and Great Britain, with smaller nations aiding and assisting had ample power. As soon as the Nazi revolution had occurred, our danger became acute, although there was still time if we had rearmed fast enough. We have seen how the Radicals had so besotted themselves with anti-Versailles talk and with varying degrees of pacifism that they were slow to turn round. The Radicals, however, were not in power. The defence ministries were in the hands of Conservatives.

<sup>1</sup> Cited by A. Berriedale Keith, *Speeches and Documents on International Affairs*, vol. II, p. 101.

In all the attribution of blame for our failure to correlate our armaments policy with our foreign policy very little has been said about the House of Commons itself. I think it is worth inquiring whether the House is inefficient as a controlling institution, because of its lack of a specialized committee system. The accepted view is that committees attached to particular departments are a nuisance and endanger the responsibility of a minister. Loose and somewhat fanciful analogies with the French Chamber of Deputies are used to discredit the idea. Yet it might well be that committees on Foreign Affairs, the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force might have done good work. They might have been of use to the ministers concerned as a means of educating the House through the members of all parties which would attend them. Mr. Lloyd George is of this opinion.<sup>1</sup> An Air Force committee which contained Mr. Churchill, and which Lord Londonderry would have attended as Minister, might well have brought about a speed-up in rearmament. A Navy committee might have had an educative effect on some of those members who were for sanctions against Japan in 1931. Twenty men meeting quietly round a table can often do better business and learn more of each other's views than some hundred members listening to an open debate. I should go so far as to say that the present system has worked so badly that the burden of proof rests on those who defend it rather than on those who advocate the use of specialized committees.

One other means of defence against an aggressor requires to be considered, and that is economic sanctions. It was clearly thought of by the authors of the Covenant as a potent weapon. Almost no State could endure a refusal to trade with her by the majority of the other nations of the world. The loss of necessary imports, the ruin caused by the failure of the export trades, the interning of all ships except those in home ports, the collapse of credit facilities, were dangers that almost no nation would dare to incur if it was felt that they would be carried out with rigour. I do not want to make too much of this weapon considered by itself. Amongst the many things which confused our thinking in the post-war years was a kind of intellectual reign of terror of economics. I am careful not to say of economists, for often their excellent advice was not taken by govern-

<sup>1</sup> Select Committee on House of Commons Procedure, 1931, Evidence, p. 55. 'It would be helpful to any minister who really wanted to do his job thoroughly, because after all that is his business.'

ments. But the theory that economics are the ultimate substance of history was very potent at this period, and whereas prior to 1914 the ideas of Karl Marx were unduly neglected, after 1918 economic determinism was too easily accepted in intellectual circles. Politics were made to appear merely an aspect of economics. It was thought that for every political trouble there was an economic explanation ; therefore for every political trouble there must be an economic cure. This idea was applied to Germany. Satisfy Germany economically and she will be satisfied politically. It was probably good policy to satisfy Germany economically, and much good work was done in that way. It is true also that when the economic slump at the end of the 'twenties hit Germany, as it hit other countries, a fertile soil was provided for the Nazis. But from what we have since seen of German appetite for power once it has got under way, it is not quite certain that prosperity would have kept the Germans peaceful. Quite apart from wanting jobs and better standards of living, they had other psychic wants ; they wanted to avenge a defeat, to extend their frontiers, to liberate their fellow Germans living under the flags of Poland and Czechoslovakia and, even more perhaps, to have Czechs and Poles living under the German flag. A German technician in a Polish town who had his job given to a Pole had an economic grievance and a serious grievance. But even if he had kept his job he would not have been without a political grievance. To find Polish notices up all over the town, to see the red and white of the Polish flag and to find the street in which he lived changed from Bismarck Street to Pilsudski Street—these were grievances also. To a very large extent politics are what people feel and not what they possess, and a man may be moved to violent language and feeling and deeds by things which do not affect his pocket. I have sailed from New York on a liner calling at Queenstown or Cobh, and therefore flying the Irish tricolour at the mast-head, and there was on board a Belfast man, one of Carson's henchmen in the days of 1914. His rage and misery were pitiful to witness. It amused me at the time, but I doubt if the sight of the St. George's Cross flying over the public buildings of Glasgow would amuse me. Economic prosperity removes a potent form of discontent, but it does not bring contentment at all certainly. We talk of its restoring self-confidence. In the abstract that is good, but, with nations, self-confidence may be a dangerous quality to bestow on your

neighbour. Fascism gave Italy 'self-confidence'; we do not know that it increased her wealth more than liberal-capitalism would have done, yet we feel fairly sure that under liberal institutions there would have been less of the self-confidence which we have since had reason to fear.

I would admit that many people placed too much reliance on what economic sanctions might do to defeat an aggressor state. It was a dangerous idea if in advancing it we were trying to avoid thinking in military terms. It was in itself most reasonable. It raised the question, however, what would the State thus blockaded do? Would it not break out and use its military force in a dangerous way on its immediate neighbours? It therefore raised military questions. We had to consider the latitude that might be allowed to a weak neighbour of an aggressor, the combined measures that might be necessary to defend it if attacked. The two questions were closely connected, and in the much-abused Peace Ballot citizens were asked to say whether they favoured, (a) economic, and (b) military sanctions. There was a huge majority for both, which shows that the electorate were not blind to the problem and not unwilling to follow a lead. The policy of economic sanctions gave the initiative to the peace-enforcing states. They had only to wait until the blockade took its course and produce submission in the end. The aggressor had to strike at once to gain rapid and decisive success; for example, in the case of Italy it had to occupy Malta, and conquer the isthmus of Suez, before a successful war could be waged in Abyssinia. If this was not done shortage of oil and ruined trade would have brought her to heel. And it is in this matter that the project of a *general* disarmament would have assisted if it could have been achieved. The lower the degree of armament the less could an aggressor do to frighten her neighbours from the use of the economic weapon. This was the great gain that would have resulted from a successful disarmament conference. It was worth attempting.

In conclusion, it may be said that to talk of our throwing away our arms after the last war is plain nonsense. It may, however, be said that we were in a state of *under-armament*, that we worked on too low a margin of warlike stores and that there was a dangerous lack of public interest in all questions pertaining to the use of arms. But there is one question that an impenitent advocate of collective security may ask of those who declared that we could not act because we lacked the arms:

What degree of armament would have been sufficient to make them act? How many more ships, tanks and aeroplanes did they require before they could approve of Great Britain's entangling herself in the obligations which the Covenant of the League implied. Would an increase of thirty, of sixty, of a hundred per cent have been enough, or is it possible that contempt and misunderstanding of the League system was so deep that they would never have moved at all?

## EPILOGUE

THE purpose of this book has been to examine how opinion developed on the problems of war and peace after the last war. I have tried to show some of the forces in public opinion that operated on the making of the Peace Treaties and to account for some of the changes which afterwards took place. Discussion of such difficult questions should be a profitable exercise for us as we turn our minds to another peace settlement. We all want to know how to avoid the errors of the past, and errors there were, although the reader will have gathered that I myself am rather more anxious about the danger of overlooking the merits of the last settlement. An expositor of past events and ideas is under no obligation to make positive suggestions for the future. None the less there is something rather barren about a book which only diagnoses and never prescribes. Although personally I am inclined to think that there is almost an overdose of prescription being given to us at the moment, I do not desire to appear as a purely censorious critic. One should always try to be constructive. If one doubts the fashionable theories one should be bold enough to say so ; if one has one's own dreams, one should not fear to declare them. A desire to appear cynical has never been one of my ambitions, nor has the fear of not being thought cynical taken a high place amongst my numerous vices.

There is one important sphere about which I do not presume to speak. That is, the future economic organization of Britain, Europe and the World. I am not an economist by profession and I am only conversant with that subject at elementary levels. At the risk of appearing to talk for effect, I will say that I consider this a sufficient reason for not venturing on the economic field. The Beveridge plan is before us and is being carefully examined. Sir William Beveridge himself is now, we are told, at work on a study of how mass unemployment can be avoided. His patient judgement and brilliant intelligence have been operating for the benefit of the average citizen of this country since the days of his illuminating evidence which was put to such good use by the famous Minority Report on the Poor Law of 1909. I do not doubt that he will produce a study that will define and light up the problem, whatever

opinion may be taken of his proposals. As an ordinary lay citizen I shall for my part start with a strong presumption in favour of accepting them, since I know of no better adviser. But there is an international side to all such economic problems, and the public of this and other countries appear to be much more alive to the need for co-operation in trade and production than they were in 1919. I would take it as certain that the International Labour Office, one of the most excellent appendages of the League of Nations, will in some form or other have great work to do. It is a heartening sign in this respect that two former Directors of the Office are now in influential positions. Mr. Winant as United States Ambassador in London is unstintedly admired in this country, and we may hope that he will carry great weight when he returns to America. Mr. Harold Butler is now holding an important position in the United States.

There is apprehension here about the United States, at present under the control of the brilliant Wilsonian *elite* which President Roosevelt has gathered round him. Vice-President Wallace, Mr. Cordell Hull, Mr. Sumner Welles and others have expressed their views about narrow economic nationalism in the clearest terms. It may be hoped that our own protectionists are taking note. But there are signs that Protectionism under the aegis of the Republican Party is strong in America, as has been shown by a debate in the Senate in which many speakers were anxious to prove that the United States is not bound *economically* by the Atlantic Charter. They seemed particularly concerned that America should not be bound by it to lower tariffs. If America fails to co-operate in world trade after this war, it would seriously impede recovery, as all economists agree. Whether it would be entirely disastrous does not seem to me so certain. It would mean that when lease-lend ended, American export trade would decline to the small trickle which could be paid for by her highly taxed imports. This, however, would not prevent the countries of Western Europe trading with other parts of the new world which were willing to accept such trade. In these circumstances economic leadership would pass again to London and to Amsterdam and Paris, which are quite possibly better trained and equipped for the task than New York and Washington. It would be wise for us in this country to prepare in the first place for economic co-operation with America, but not to be taken aback or taken by surprise if it

should not be forthcoming. For such an event we should also have our plans, a complex problem which I hope our economists are thinking of. It is said, however, that it should be possible for the world to use all its production of foodstuffs by providing a 'higher standard of diet in all countries. If this can be done, and such men as Vice-President Wallace in the United States and Sir John Orr in this country are eloquent advocates of the policy, it should be possible to avoid the problems raised hitherto by unconsumed surpluses of agricultural produce.

A greater danger than a reversion to economic isolation on the part of America is a reversion to political isolationism. In this country we are anxious to believe that such an event could not occur. If ever a policy was blasted out of existence in a moment of time it should be isolationism by the bombs and torpedoes of Pearl Harbour. One would think that between 1919 and 1939 all that could ever be achieved by keeping aloof had been attempted and its failure exposed. Yet some of our American friends are warning us that political isolationism will revive and is even now far from dead. Americans are now fighting in eight combat zones, some of them very horrible places, Papuan swamps and African deserts. These men when they return will no doubt swear an oath of 'never again'. 'Never again' may be achieved in one of two ways ; there is the policy of resolving to be ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice to prevent another general war ; there is the policy of resolving never to go anywhere and in the short view that is easier and cheaper. We have also to reckon with the inveterate American tendency to think that Europe is a bad place, politically and morally. It is not for Englishmen to be too censorious on this score. We have too often ourselves felt morally superior to the Continent and with regard to the Orient have repeated Kipling's famous line which sets the Isthmus of Suez as the frontier of moral principle.

The place of Russia in the post-war world is also an enigma both with regard to economic and political matters. Our failure to bring Russia into the European system in the nineteen-twenties, or Russia's inability to come in because of her political ideology (both views have been taken on the question), was one of the reasons for the breakdown of peace. There is, however, good reason to hope that mutual sympathy and respect bred in this war will make possible better co-operation after it. In spite of the mutterings on the Left in British politics, to the

effect that there are sinister forces in this country hostile to Russia, I find that generous and grateful appreciation of her efforts is overwhelmingly predominant even amongst very stout Tories. Provided that Moscow does not expect us to fight a civil war on a class basis to round off this war, I believe that all British governments will be willing to meet Russia more than half way.

Everyone now seems to be agreed that another attempt must and will be made to ensure world peace. There is general agreement, too, that this cannot be done by the mere revival of the old League of Nations. However good it may have been the old names will not do. The mere association of failure would weaken them. If therefore we are to have another Covenant, let us by all means call it a Charter or a Bond; if we are to have a League, let us call it an Alliance. Field-Marshal Smuts in his famous speech in Westminster Hall suggested as a successor to the League of Nations the term 'United Nations', which we are using in war. In all probability the issue was decided in that moment and the term will become current. But if we are to call ourselves 'the United Nations', then we must not this time be ashamed of being 'an alliance of victors'. After the last war Germans were repelled from the League by the fact that it began as an alliance of victors, and many sensitive people in this country repeated the phrase. The powers engaged in this war could make provision for general security, and neutrals and eventually reformed enemy states could enter it. The principles on which it would act would be the same as the principles laid down in the Covenant of the old League, for there are no other principles.

There are, however, different methods of organizing the enforcement of peace. It is now thought that there will be four strong centres, Washington, London, Moscow, and Chungking, and that four great powers, presumed to be satisfied with their territories and their status, would provide in any part of the world such force as would deter an aggressor. Smaller powers would take their part in this system according to their abilities and geographical position. This is not really so very different from the former League. It is not true that the Covenant made all nations equal. It provided that great powers should be permanent members of the Council of the League while others could only be elected in turn by the Assembly in which all the Members sat. In practice, too, the smaller states looked for

leadership to the permanent members of the Council, as Great Britain and France found in 1935. None the less the new Alliance of the United Nations will appear more convincing than the old League, and therefore have a better chance of success. There should be a greater and more solid volume of opinion behind it. Some of the old causes of weakness should be less in evidence. Pacifism, in the sense of non-resistance, should be a less potent force. We cannot be sure that it will not reappear, and I personally look forward with dread to the outcrop of realistic war-novels which is to be expected round about 1950. Yet in the Anglo-Saxon countries the cries that war does not pay, that war settles nothing, will surely be fewer. Such ideas are the stock-in-trade of peoples who consider war as something in which you always win. You count up all the loss of war and measure it against the so-called gains. But unless you reckon the first and greatest gain to be *the fact that you were not defeated*, you will probably strike a debit balance. In England at any rate the narrowness of our escape from defeat has been so vividly realized that it should not be forgotten. There should also be less belief in the merits of keeping ourselves free from general international commitments, that policy which in this country has been called realism as opposed to idealism, and in America has frequently been called both. Ultimately there is no security against war except in the disposition of the peoples to avoid it by the moderation of their conduct and their determination to unite in preventing it.

The problem of the world-wide organization to preserve peace in the future is too far-reaching to be dealt with in one short chapter. All I propose to do here is to make certain suggestions about our own part of the world, Western Europe. I take it as generally accepted that for our own security we must ensure that the coast of Western Europe shall not be in the hands of a power hostile to us, or likely to become hostile. The principles on which we have fought this war, and even our own moral and political nature, forbid us to try to hold such territories by force. There is therefore only one conclusion. The countries of Western Europe must be in alliance or association or even in union with us. To achieve this in some satisfactory form is the best contribution which the people of Great Britain can make. The British Commonwealth as a whole has a wider part to play, and while the two would be closely related, they can be thought of separately. But a closer association of the states of Western

Europe would have the advantage of giving greater confidence to the overseas states and especially to America. The struggles between Japan and China and Germany and Russia show us that population is not everything. None the less, population is something. A state that is under a certain limit of population is likely to be ineffective as a military unit. It may be that some monopoly of certain secrets of physics might give Portugal, Sweden, or New Zealand the power to overawe the world, but we can only hope that will not happen. I do not see what else can be done about it.

Now as compared with Russia, America, and China, our population is small, a mere forty-seven millions compared with more than one hundred and thirty-seven millions of the United States. The Americans, reputedly not shy in thinking in terms of numbers and magnitude, are well aware of this. If they are to take responsibilities in Europe, they will want a greater nucleus than this and they will want to know that there is a land foothold in Europe. These demands we cannot supply by ourselves.

But if the political or military system which they have to deal with was a firm alliance of the countries of Western Europe, then the magnitude would be more convincing. It could consist of those countries which, like England and France, voluntarily entered the war against Nazi Germany and the smaller nations who were forced into the war by German invasion. Community of effort and suffering in this war would be the effective bond of such a grouping. The populations are as follows : Great Britain, 47 millions ; France, 42 millions ; Belgium, 8 millions ; Netherlands, 8 millions ; Norway, 3 millions. This gives a total of 108 millions. Together these states possess great natural resources and great industrial power. They have colonial possessions already developed or with great possibilities of development. United, they form a very great power. The more closely united they are, the more impressive is the power. The problem is, how far can they be united ?

A close and well-organized military alliance might seem to be sufficient. But there are dangers in this. The closer the military alliance the more shattering would be the defection of any one of the partners, particularly one of the two major partners. But even one of the lesser powers could wreck the strategic position of the alliance. Before and even during the war there has been much talk of the unimportance of small states. That

they cannot lead and dominate the great powers is clear enough, but they may profoundly affect the course of a war ; witness, for example, the resistance of Portugal to Napoleon which gave Wellington his base in the Peninsula. It may perhaps be hoped that this canting talk about the unimportance of small states will not survive this war in which we have seen how much use the Germans have made of their satellite nations to extend and man the Russian front, and the gratitude with which we have received the help of the small numbers of our European Allies who have been able to come over to us. An effective alliance which would be convincing to Americans, Russians, and Chinese would have to be so well-knit politically that there was little chance of it breaking asunder. That this could be done without a real political union, I do not believe. I would therefore advocate a return to the policy of Bordeaux, to the great offer which our Government made just before the collapse of France, an offer of political union and common citizenship. I do not hesitate to say that this was the finest and boldest act of English statesmanship since the Union with Scotland in 1707.

At the present time public feeling in this country about France is too much confused and often too hostile for this suggestion to be received with much patience by many. But I can at least plead that in making it I am not in danger of riding some popular prejudice to death or taking advantage of some easy current of opinion. I have already given some reasons for cultivating sympathy and appreciation of France's position in this war. It is not so much her vices and our virtues that have determined the differences in our fates, as the geographical fact of the English Channel. It should be remembered that something must be done about France, or rather that France must do something about herself. If she has again to face the danger of conquest by a powerful Central European state, she is not likely to be willing to fight alone. If she has not firm support from us and from people overseas, she will be inclined to make terms, to be not with us but against us, nor could she be blamed for this. Neither Britain nor America can face a United Europe dominated by military ideas. Even excluding Russia, the population is well over twice the population of the North American Continent, its industrial resources not inferior, its military experience vastly greater. A French writer has expressed the consequences of a parting between England and France in these words :

' The parting of the ways between England and France would have an inevitable consequence ; the law of gravitation would eventually draw France into the orbit of the vaster ethnical groups and leave England permanently in the very position in which she now finds herself as a result of war emergency, that of an outsider. . . . Europe would in fact, in despite of any theoretical reconstructions, be shaped or shape itself according to a process of evolution in which the Western factor would play a smaller and smaller part. . . . In accepting this we should be making on a tremendous scale the same mistake as those Frenchmen who believed that French civilization could survive its merger with the Germanic folk.'<sup>1</sup>.

This is the dilemma with which we are faced. It is almost more our dilemma than that of France. In making this tremendous choice I do not believe there can be half measures. It is a commonplace of English wisdom that in political and constitutional matters things should be left to grow, brick put upon brick, all sudden and complete changes avoided. Sometimes this is so. At other times it is a dangerous fallacy based on false analogies between our constitutional history and that of other countries. There are times when the iron is hot and must be struck now and not later. It was so with the Union with Scotland ; it was so when the great American statesmen hammered out the Constitution of the United States. History may be thought of as a stream flowing past, which one may plunge into at any time. Sometimes it is better thought of as a tide which must be taken at the flood or lost. When this war ends there should be a full tide in Western Europe, a tide which may not recur in our generation.

At this point it might be wise to write finis to this book. The last paragraphs could be regarded as a broad general conclusion with some basis of sense, or else as a rhetorical flourish impressive to those who care to be impressed by such things. To say that some course of political action is dictated by the logic of events or is shaping itself in the womb of history rounds off a discussion nicely and saves the author further trouble. But if one has been so rash as to come to any conclusion at all, one is in a dilemma. If you merely state the broad general principle you will be dismissed as vague, but on the other hand its vagueness saves you from criticism on detail. If on the other hand you go on and make your suggestion more precise, if you give

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Maillaud, *France* (Oxford University Press), p. 131.

form and substance to your general ideas, you increase the scorn of those who object to the principle and displease, by dressing it in the wrong clothes, those who are friendly to your general conception. You are open to such epithets as *pinchbeck* Jeremy Bentham, Abbé Siéyès *manqué* and so on. In a word, you will be hailed as a crank, which will not only bring contempt on your particular proposals but will in retrospect discredit most of your previous argument. But of the two alternatives I prefer the latter. It is, on the whole, more honest. Of course, nothing is easier than to declare that 'what we want in the organization of security in Western Europe is a greater inter-correlation and co-ordination of the relevant common factors of interest, whether in the economic or political sphere, with the object of integrating such forces with a view to external security and distributing social benefit in such a way as to prevent a disequilibrium in productivity and consumption, even if it means some abnegation of formal state sovereignty as hitherto conceived.' This is easy ; it will bore almost everyone but offend few and give no handle for ridicule.

But in advocating any form of political union it is better to give some sample or picture of what it would be like if your schemes were carried out. Generalizations weary people and fill them with suspicion. If they can see even a corner of the new world into which they are being invited, they will pay more attention than if they are only shown the curtain. How often have people felt in the past that apostles of the Socialist State make it seem rather like what we hear through mediums about the Other Side, namely, that it is all very bright and beautiful.

In the early stages of the war there was much discussion about Federal Union. Many good ideas were ventilated. What I am proposing is of course a variety of Federal Union, but for purposes of advocacy I would be careful never to employ the word Federal. To us, however it may be in America, federal is a weak and unconvincing word. It is indeed unnecessary. What is in contemplation is a Union. It is much better to call it so. That it is not a complete union will appear from the terms, and in any case no one but a lunatic would suggest such a thing. No one would propose that the people and institutions of Winchester, Perpignan, Liége, Utrecht and Trondjem should be *gleichgeschaltet*. America and Russia are Federal States, but they call themselves Unions. We would do well to copy this

good example. I will therefore lay down what I think might be some of the articles of such a Union.

In the first place, it would have to be inaugurated with solemnity, after the jurists and statesmen had come to agreement on the terms. I suppose that in recognition of its martyrdom in the bombing, this should be held in London, in Westminster Hall or the damaged Guildhall. The sovereign parliaments of the five nations concerned would send delegations empowered to act for them. They would agree to 'A solemn act of Union and Common endeavour' which would bind the five peoples together in one superstate with common ideas of liberty and a common force for its defence and for the defence of the United Nations. The Sovereign Heads of the states being present would signify their assent in their own language and by their own style.

All the Sovereign Heads, the Kings of Great Britain, Belgium and Norway, and the Queen of the Netherlands and the President of the French Republic (or whatever title might be adopted for the head of the French State) would retain all their titles and dignities, their laws and methods of succession. They would enjoy precedence over the other heads when in their own dominions. This would alter no present practice and all the attachment that comes to the State by deference to the crown would remain. This is important since people often think that political union implies submission to some nameless and shapeless authority.

The supreme Parliament or Assembly of the Union would be constituted on the example of the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy, a not very admirable but in its day quite an efficient community. We assume the existence of a Parliament in each State, which would send a Delegation to transact with the other Delegations all business recognized as being common to the Union. This Assembly of the Delegations should not be a very large body, say not more than 250, and it could meet in the capitals of any of the States. Air transport makes such matters easy now. Defence, external policy and common finance would be the chief subjects dealt with.

The Delegations would also elect an Executive Council. Here the Swiss model seems to be the most appropriate. A Council dependent on a Parliamentary vote would not be workable, and in any case the Delegations would not be frequently in session, nor in session for long periods at a time. The Council of the

Union would be elected not all at one time. Its members would be slowly replaced. The period of office should be long, perhaps seven years. It would probably be unwise to make them not re-eligible, but they should be encouraged to retire by large pensions and positions of great dignity. There should be four specific offices and, say, five Councillors-at-large. This would give us a body little larger than our present war cabinet. Each nation would hope to have at least one councillor, but this would be best left to general good sense and not stated formally. The Swiss show great moderation in this as between the three languages and two religions of their State. The four Offices should be, the First Minister of the Union, the Marshal of the Union in charge of all defence, the Treasurer of the Union in charge of finance, and, for external affairs, the State Secretary of the Union.

The Union would have a common armed force by land, air, and sea. It might be organized on national lines up to divisional formations and some equivalent formation in the Navy and Air Force. In view of the experience of this war and the need for co-operation with America, the common language of the armed forces and for most other purposes would have to be English, but French would be the first language taught after English. With intelligent use of the wireless and gramophone we might reach new standards of linguistic teaching. A special defence capital of the Union should be constructed in some safe spot far to the west. The Island of Anglesey suggests itself a suitable place, level enough for large aerodromes and hard of access from the centre of Europe. Since the purpose of the Union is to prevent an American-European War, attack from the Atlantic will be ruled out.

While it may be hoped that most litigation would be dealt with by the ordinary courts of the states, there would be need of a High Court of the Union. Since it is convenient for a law court to have a permanent seat, this might be placed in Holland as a tribute to the great services of that nation to jurisprudence.

The project of union implies that the states all enjoy constitutional democratic government. But it would be necessary to have a law of sedition. This would make punishable certain acts such as plotting the dissolution of the Union, advocating the suppression of free speech within the Union and organizing a general strike in essential services within a State of the Union. The experience of America in the Civil War suggests the need

for the first item in the sedition law ; the second item would make it difficult for fascist projects to be encouraged ; the third would be desirable to prevent a situation in which one State of the Union suffering from a general strike, might invoke the help of forces from another State. It would be desirable to have a uniform libel law as strict as the law of libel in England. This does much to keep political strife within reasonable bounds. Without a strict law of libel duelling and blackmail are apt to arise.

The most difficult questions are those which deal with the economic life of the Union. Would there be a uniform currency ? I have been told that this would be extremely difficult to arrange and that rates of exchange between the different states should be controlled without going so far as to erect a common currency. The existing central banks would probably have to continue, but there could be a banking authority to supervise co-operation between them. After all, we have had the Bank for International Settlements in Basle, which was said to do good work before the war. Since in any political project symbols are of high importance, the money of the states of the Union might be made uniform in name, even if its exchange rates varied. Thus we might make the unit the pound sterling divided decimaly into florins and groats.

We should have a golden opportunity after the war to establish free exchange of goods. The great hindrance to all tariff changes of a sweeping nature, whether up or down, is that some trades are ruined and others fostered. Now when all trade between Britain and the Continent has come to an end we can start with a blank sheet, a chance very rare in history. Moreover, if we are to encourage America to become even a relatively freely trading nation, we should set a good example in Europe. Exceptions would have to be made for duties, whether customs or excise, on alcohol, if only not to cause too violent a change in habits. These might be fixed on something like the pre-war basis, but the duties should be levied by the exporting country so that the importing country would be free from a temptation to raise them and also unable to repeat fallacies about ' making the foreigner pay '. One of the most difficult questions would be the subsidizing of agriculture and the question of how much food should be imported from Canada, South America, Australia and elsewhere. These problems I leave to my economist brethren ; in an age when so much is to be planned I do not

doubt that they can plan even better for a large area than for a small area. It would probably be necessary for the states to control the immigration of labour from one State to another, otherwise the most prosperous State at the moment would be overrun, or else the most highly Beveridged State would be a Mecca for the people of the rest. One of the tasks of the statesmen of the Union would be to try to establish some kind of equality in social benefits between the states. As this will no doubt be attempted on a wider field after the war, there is no reason why it should not be worked out for the five nations. Restriction on immigration does not necessarily violate the concept of a common citizenship, witness for example the Canadian immigration laws, which may exclude an Englishman from Canada but do not make him a foreigner there if he does get in. The immigration question may not perhaps be very difficult, for language and social customs may keep the different nationals willing to stay in their own homes, and in any case, as Adam Smith has told us, 'Man is of all forms of luggage the most difficult to be transported.'

The relation of the British Dominions to the Union raises problems, but the Union, so far as I can judge, would not be repugnant to the Statute of Westminster. Some people in the Dominions might feel like a grown-up son whose father marries again, but the link of the Crown would still remain. The King would still be King of Great Britain and King in Canada. The Dominions are already free to separate. A common purchasing policy for raw materials, if it could be adopted by the Union, might be of great advantage to the Dominions. Closer association with Holland might be pleasing to the Afrikanders, and closer association with France agreeable to the people of Quebec. Ireland would be free to change her extremely metaphysical association with the British Commonwealth for membership of the Union, if her statesmen could bring themselves to come to Westminster and if the Irish Republican Army could be properly subjected to the sedition law of the Union. In view of the events of the war, the frontier of Ulster could not be made a bargaining point in discussing the admission of Ireland.

Each State, except Norway, has a tropical Colonial Empire which would remain associated with its ruling State as at present, in accordance with the degree of subjection or freedom which it has or may have in future. The states of the Union would probably exchange administrative ideas and personnel

in their colonial services with mutual profit. Since Norway has no really habitable colonial possessions, Norwegians might be admitted to compete for British overseas appointments.<sup>1</sup> It would be a reasonable reward for their staunchness in this war. It would also be a politic step, since one of the inducements that Germany has been able to offer to quislings in these countries which she had conquered, is a hope of participation in a great European Reich with large parts of the world to be developed on Nordic lines. The English who so patiently endured the Scottish infiltration in the Empire in the eighteenth century would have an opportunity to display their noted tolerance and fair-mindedness.

It would be a moot point whether other European states should be admitted into the Union. Denmark and Portugal are possible cases. It might not be prudent to extend the Union too far. In any case, before the prayer of a State to enter the Union could be received it would be necessary for the Government of the Union to be satisfied that the political and social condition of that country made it suitable for membership.

One bogey that besets critics of all plans of greater union between states is the notion that it means the disappearance of all colour and individuality. Thus Mr. A. P. Herbert, in an otherwise excellent broadcast talk on the value of flags, ended up with a sneer at the prospect of the day when there would be federal union and only one flag would be seen in all the Port of London. There is no reason to fear this, as Mr. Herbert would understand if he was in Edinburgh on the day of some public festival, when he would hardly be able to discover a Union Jack anywhere in the display of Scottish Lions and St. Andrew's Crosses. All the states of the Union would keep their own flags and all other insignia, and the port of London be as bright as ever. Even the naval vessels could have their own flags, as the ships of our Allies do at this moment. It would, of course, for some purposes and for some occasions, be necessary to have a common flag, which would be over and above the national flags. To give a final pictorial touch to my scheme, I would suggest that the Ensign of the Union should be the St. Patrick's Cross. The present rulers of Ireland when they received their independence abandoned this ancient and beautiful flag for an anaemic tricolour, and have therefore lost their right to it. This

<sup>1</sup> Spitzbergen and the Antarctic possessions of Norway may come to have value in the future.

flag, very clear and simple, a diagonal red cross on a white field, would have a certain symbolism ; it is reminiscent of the great days of Holy Ireland, when the Irish kept the fire of Christian civilization burning when large parts of Europe was sinking under a cruel barbarism, and Irish missionaries played a great part in the redemption of Europe afterwards. This is what we conceive ourselves, to be doing now. Certainly it is not the present-day Irish who are the heirs of St. Patrick and St. Columba in this respect.

This project for a Union of Western Europe does not solve many baffling problems such as those of Central and South-Eastern Europe, which will have to be faced in consultation with Russia. But it would be the most solid contribution we could make to European reconstruction and would bring a sense of security to states which would not be members, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, Switzerland or Greece. Napoleon, when he became ruler of France, said that he wanted to throw some blocks of granite into the morass of anarchy which France was supposed to have become under the previous government. A solid block of granite on the western coast of Europe would be a great stepping-stone to a peaceful and settled Europe. In this country we are often advocates of union for other peoples whom we consider too small to stand by themselves or too prone to quarrel with each other. We have seen in an earlier chapter how Western Europe in the nineteenth century split into smaller units than had been left by the peace settlement of 1815, and how the British colonies became independent states. We give a welcome to ideas of a Danubian Federation, a Balkan Federation ; if we are so prodigal of our blessings on these ideas, we should at least bethink ourselves whether there is not something to be done nearer home.

I conclude, therefore, with my sketch, fanciful as it may seem, of a joining together of those states which, sharing the cultural and moral tradition of Western European civilization, have fought together to defend it. If a critic should doubt whether it is useful, I would ask him to consider whether, if it had been possible to create such a union twenty years ago, the present war would have been more or less easy to prevent. If a critic doubts whether it is possible, I reply that in politics dangers overcome, hardships endured and victory achieved will make many things possible that were not so before, and I will further ask him what he himself would propose that would be more,

satisfactory to ourselves and more encouraging to our friends across the sea.

None the less, however agreeable and satisfactory such speculations about a juridical union of the western nations may appear to their author, it has to be confessed that the chances of realizing them would not be reckoned by most citizens of this country as anything but remote. We have then to reckon with the probability that the United Nations, large and small, will retain their full legal sovereignty and seek security by international agreements for common action which any one of them will be free to abrogate. No one can say that peace cannot be secured in this way. But it will place a greater burden on the wisdom and courage and forbearance of the statesmen and peoples of the nations. Great Britain will once again fall into a dubious position between the magnetic attraction of the land mass of Europe and the pull of the New World. We may say now that aviation has made isolation from the Continent impossible and that we must stand with our fellow nations across the Channel and the North Sea. Yet it will be murmured that the Channel did prove a barrier in 1940 and that perhaps after all we can keep within our own bounds and still be safe. In Belgium and Holland it would now be thought that the idea of neutrality was completely discredited, but voices will be raised, pointing out that Sweden and Switzerland did after all keep out of war. Some change in the mechanics of war might alter our perspective. If anti-aircraft devices were improved to the point that a ship or a fortress or city could count on destroying hostile aircraft, then neutrality, independence and isolation would become feasible policies. At least, there would be a strong temptation to think that they were feasible.

Political communities that retain full sovereignty and freedom of action do so at their peril, and to avoid fusion they may count the danger worth the risk. In so far as such communities reject the solid and satisfying security of a real union, they place their trust in their own wisdom to act with great skill and prudence, with wisdom and resolution, when danger arises in some circumstances which cannot exactly be foreseen. Holland, Belgium, Norway, Britain and France may swear never to forget their interdependence on each other, to have a common military policy, to come to each other's aid; yet if, by retaining political independence, they make it juridically possible to reject their obligations of mutual help, then they

are keeping open an insidious temptation which may prove too strong in a moment of crisis. At present it would seem that in all probability independence will be retained and the dangers which it implies accepted. We can only hope that the wisdom of our own generation and the generation which follows us will prove equal to the test.

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